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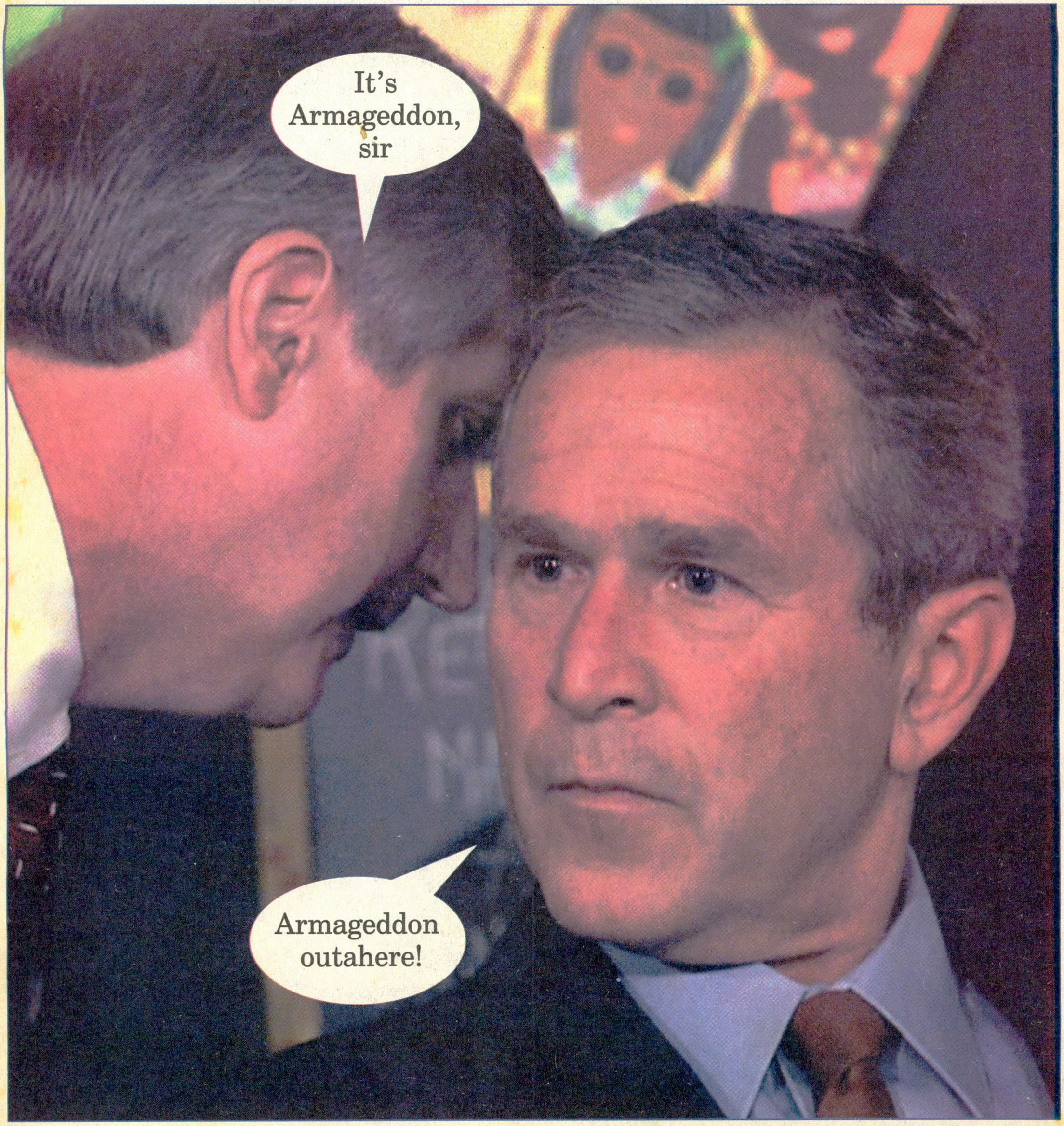
PRIVATE EYE

BUSH TAKES CHARGE



Gnome

WHILST OF COURSE we are all deeply shocked and saddened by the tragic events of last Tuesday, we should not be blinded to the fact that this was an attack on everything that we in the civilised world hold most dear – our money.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack it was terrifying to think that in a few brief moments all our money could be lost. As I write, we still do not know the full extent of our losses – in some cases they are almost impossible to calculate.

But surely what is important now is to demonstrate that we will not be bowed nor cowed, and that we are determined to reaffirm our faith in the eternal virtues of money.

So I say to you – go out and spend your money as if there is no tomorrow. Only that way will there be one.

Lord Gnome
The Gnome Trade Centre
Grand Cayman

"Sell ploughshares! Buy swords!"

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Mortimer House, 230-236 Lavender Hill, London SW11 1LE.
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Email: subscriptions@private-eye.co.uk

EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. Tel: 020-7437 4017.
Fax: 020-7437 0705. Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk.
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ABC

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OSAMA bin Laden was an easy man to demonise even before the World Trade Center bombing. The attractive idea of a vastly rich, evil mastermind controlling and funding a worldwide terror network owes much to such fictional figures as the James Bond villain Ernst Blofeld and his dreaded SPECTRE organisation, able to threaten or blackmail the civilised world.

But in what former CIA counter-terrorism chief James Angleton tellingly described as the wilderness of mirrors, what you see is not always real; and it is often distorted for political purposes by intelligence agencies and their friends in the media who happily print unquestioningly what they are told by unnamed sources with no ability to verify the hand-fed information.

So bin Laden was endowed with a huge fortune of up to $300m and a yearly income of up to $50m (some return!) with which to plan and execute a global terror jihad. What the evidence is for this claim is far from clear, especially given the Americans' inability to trace or block these funds.

Those with knowledge of the Saudi bin Laden construction empire from which Osama obtained his wealth suggest, his share of that fortune was far more modest following the death of his father as it had to be shared among some 50 brothers and sisters.

Furthermore, once he became identified with the anti-American terror campaign following the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, his assets in Saudi Arabia were frozen and he no longer received a multi-million stipend from the family business.

More likely than that bin Laden finances terrorism from his back pocket is that he, like others in his loose network or coalition, is the recipient of substantial funds from those, both individuals and Arab states, who are only too willing to contribute to his cause so long as they remain in the shadows, free from the risk of American revenge.

This would help to explain why, despite bin Laden's ever rising profile, the US and its allies have seemed unable even to identify let alone seize or freeze his assets in banks or stem the flows of cash. Given the computer and electronic technology available to the CIA and the National Security Agency, it seems odd that such large sums cannot be detected coming into or out of Afghanistan or those Arab states sympathetic to bin Laden such as Iraq, Syria, Sudan and Libya.

Part of the problem is that money from those who secretly support bin Laden and other anti-American Islamic terrorist groups flows into respectable fronts in countries supposedly opposed to his aims such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and Pakistan. From there funds can move through banks into accounts run by phoney charities in Britain or other countries with large Muslim populations. There are no shortage of suitably opaque offshore havens with brass plate banks, such as in the South Pacific, to assist in this movement.

Another problem in tracking money funnelled to parts of the terror network linked to bin Laden and other Islamic extremists in Europe and the US is the "hawala" banking system relied upon throughout the Indian sub-continent, but especially in Pakistan. The "hawala" system has long been a problem for law enforcement agencies combating the laundering of drug money.

Under this system money is paid in one country and collected in another within hours or at most days, reliant solely on confirmation of the initial deposit. Traditionally a chit was issued showing receipt of the money. That chit could then be presented in the other country for payment. Technology has removed the need for that. The money moves across borders without ever leaving a bank account, assuming one is used. There is no paper trail and no bank involvement.

Unlike with the drug cartels or Mafia-organised crime groups in Italy and the US or even the IRA, law enforcement and intelligence agencies have proved unable to substantially penetrate the financial systems which underpin the bin Laden network.

All of which indicates why, despite the rhetoric, it has been impossible to prevent the financing of Islamic terrorists in the past and may prove no different in the future.

'Slicker'

AS AN expert in counter-terrorism – and an author with a book to promote – Dame Stella Rimington is happy to share her thoughts on the New York outrage with interviewers.

Talking to Gyles Brandreth of the *Sunday Telegraph*, she boasts that MI5 will make a big contribution to the investigation. "My former colleagues will now be trailing back through all the intelligence they've got, sifting it minutely in the hope of finding something."

One can only hope these ex-colleagues are better informed than their old boss. Explaining why the first suspect isn't always the real culprit, she gvies this example: "When Lockerbie happened, immediately everyone said it was the Palestinians. It turned out to be Libya."

As *Eye* readers know – but the former head of MI5 apparently doesn't – it "turned out" to be not nearly as simple as that. Perhaps Dame Stella should invest in the *Eye* pamphlet Lockerbie: *The Flight from Justice* to find out what she somehow failed to discover during her years in charge of Britain's security service.

More on Lockerbie... page 26.

"If only I could go to Paradise with you – but, alas, I'm needed here on Earth"

NEWS

AMERICA's son of Star Wars national missile defence system could not have prevented the tragedy of 11 September, but it remained high on the agenda of the defence systems and equipment international (DSEI) arms fair which began in London's Docklands the same day.

A seminar entitled "New Threats, New Responses – The practicalities of modern defence strategies" was scheduled for 12 September. The chair was Colonel Richard H. Bounsall, deputy director theatre airspace (air defence), MoD; and the speakers were Major General Peter C. Franklin, deputy director, Ballistic Missile Defense Organisation, USA; Mr John McCulloch, head of advanced systems and technology, BAE Systems, talking about "Missile Defence: Opportunities for European Industry"; and Dr Mike Rance, an independent consultant addressing the seminar on "The Implications of Missile Defence for Europe".

PS: In the last issue we reported that *Private Eye* had been refused a press pass by conference organisers who did not see the *Eye* as a "legitimate journal". But an *Eye* stringer managed to infiltrate the high security convention nonetheless, merely by donning a shirt and tie.

THE CIA and air crash investigators probing the World Trade Center catastrophe may well have reason to reopen the file on another recent air crash.

On 31 October 1999 a Boeing 767 belonging to Egyptair on route from New York to Cairo suddenly plunged from 33,000 feet into the Atlantic. All 217 on board were killed. Initial reports targeted the cause as anything from mechanical failure to an anti-aircraft missile, but as data from the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) and flight data recorder (FDR) emerged, it became obvious that the cause may well have been more sinister.

Suspicions centred around Gamil al-Batouti, one of two relief co-pilots on board, who took control shortly before the incident. After the captain briefly left the cockpit, leaving al-Batouti in sole charge, the aircraft plunged into the Atlantic. During the death dive, al-Batouti can clearly be heard repeating "*Tawakilt ala allah*" ("I put my trust in God") no fewer than 17 times.

American accident investigators quickly concluded that the cause of the crash was pilot suicide. But this was totally rejected by the Egyptian government and the head of the Egyptian Pilots Association who insisted: "We have nothing called suicide." Both suggested mechanical failure and pointed to a lack of motive on the part of al-Batouti.

Shortly after the crash CNN reporter Ben Wedeman confirmed live from Cairo that Egyptair had confirmed that prior to New York, the aircraft had landed at Edwards Air Force Base in California. Both American and Egyptian authorities later denied that claim. But at least 34 Egyptian Air Force personnel – among them a general – were among the victims. Most are thought to have been returning to Egypt after successfully completing a conversion course on the Cobra helicopter – a favourite and very effective anti-terrorist weapon.

Sources have suggested to the *Eye* that 59-year-old al-Batouti was told by fundamentalists that if the plane landed back in Egypt his family would be killed. Such suggestions were dismissed by intelligence experts at the time. The fundamentalists, they insisted, were far too unsophisticated.

WHAT do America's allies know about John Robert Bolton, George Bush's under secretary of state for arms control, non proliferation and international security?

Arguably Bolton is the most hawkish appointment in the president's new administration. He was due to reveal some of his thinking in Britain last week while making the case for national missile defence during high level meetings at the foreign office and Chatham House, home of the influential think tank, the Royal Institute of International Affairs. The trip was cancelled due to events in Manhattan.

Bolton's original appointment drew immediate comment in Washington that his staunch unilateralism over defence – he has long urged the scrapping of the 1972 anti-ballistic missile non-proliferation treaty – put him out of kilter with other Bush appointees such secretary of state Colin Powell.

But what of his views on such things as the United Nations and its security council – a body whose approval the Bush administration may have to seek for its planned assaults on terrorists and those states which might harbour them?

Shortly before his appointment, when the US was arguing that it should not pay its arrears to the UN, John Robert Bolton said: "Many Republicans in congress – and perhaps a majority – not only do not care about losing a [UN] General Assembly vote, but actually see it as a 'make my day outcome'. Indeed once the vote is lost, and the adverse consequences predicted by the UN's supporters begin to occur, this will simply provide further evidence to many why nothing more should be paid to the UN system."

And what does Bolton think of China, a security council member whose support Bush may also seek? China is already unnerved by Washington's decision to bale out from the ABM treaty and by the administration's courting of Taiwan. Here is what John Robert Bolton had to say on this vexed issue: "Diplomatic recognition of Taiwan would be just the kind of recognition of US leadership that the region needs... For too long Beijing has indulged in angry and intemperate language reminiscent of Nikita Khruschev's performance at the UN when he pounded his shoe on his desk to express displeasure. Beijing should be told that such carrying on is not acceptable."

Last month former Republican congressman Jesse Helms said of Bolton: "John Bolton is the kind of man with whom I would want to stand next to at Armageddon, if it should be my lot to be on hand for what is forecast to be the final battle between good and evil in this world." How long will Helms have to wait?

THE rush to buy cataclysmic books predicting the end of the world has seen internet sales of the predictions of Nostradamus soar through the roof. But as bestsellers go, few can match the stunning success over the years of the notorious Turner Diaries by extreme right-wing author and backwoodsman William Pierce.

The Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh told prosecutors he had got the idea for bombing the FBI building from the Turner Diaries, which were published in 1978. Pierce sketched out the circumstances in which an FBI building would be destroyed – in order to topple the federal, Zionist conspiracy, administration – courtesy of a bomb placed in a hijacked delivery truck. McVeigh subsequently obliged.

It may be possible that Osama bin Laden is also familiar with the frighteningly true-to-life ending of the Turner Diaries – in which a plane is hijacked by terrorists and flown into the Pentagon.

THE Rev Jerry Falwell has already found culprits for the twin towers bombing: er, lesbians.

The Rev Falwell, a long-time friend of the Bush family whose backing ensured George Dubya won the Republican nomination for president, blamed the Sapphic sorority for the attack two days after the bombing. He said the "forces of secularism" had made God "lift the veil of protection" from America, causing the terrorist attack.

On Pat Robertson's influential American Christian programme, the *700 club*, Falwell claimed: "I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle... the American Civil Liberties Union, People For the American Way (a civil rights group), all of them who have tried to secularise America... I point the finger in their face and say: 'You helped this happen'."

With Falwell identifying lesbians as the culprit, can it be long before American politicians demand that aircraft carriers be sent to Lesbia, so the Lesbianese government can be forced to hand over Osama bin Lesbian or face the consequences?

"To whom it may concern..."

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Americans... were convinced two decades ago that their best interests lay in supporting Islamic fundamentalists battling a Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan. The ascendancy of the Taliban, and the shelter it offers Osama bin Laden, shows how well that strategy turned out in the long run."

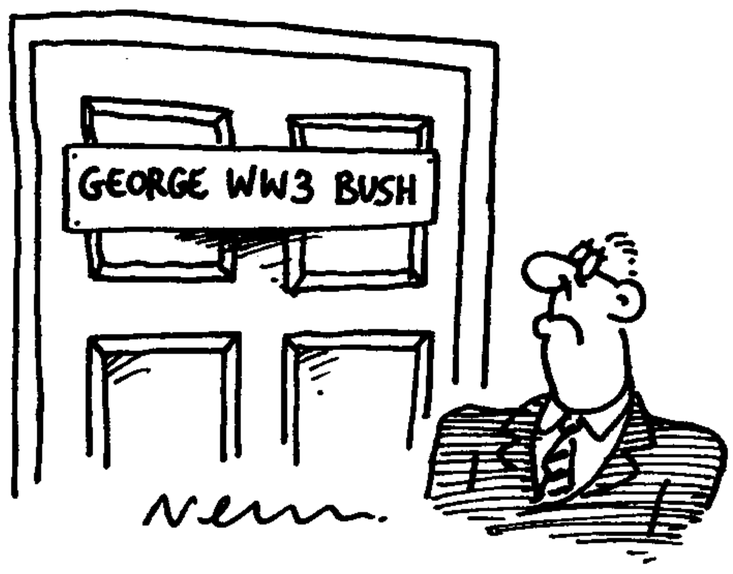
New York Times, 2 September.

ON Saturday afternoon a meeting of Sinn Fein Central Committee took place in Dublin.

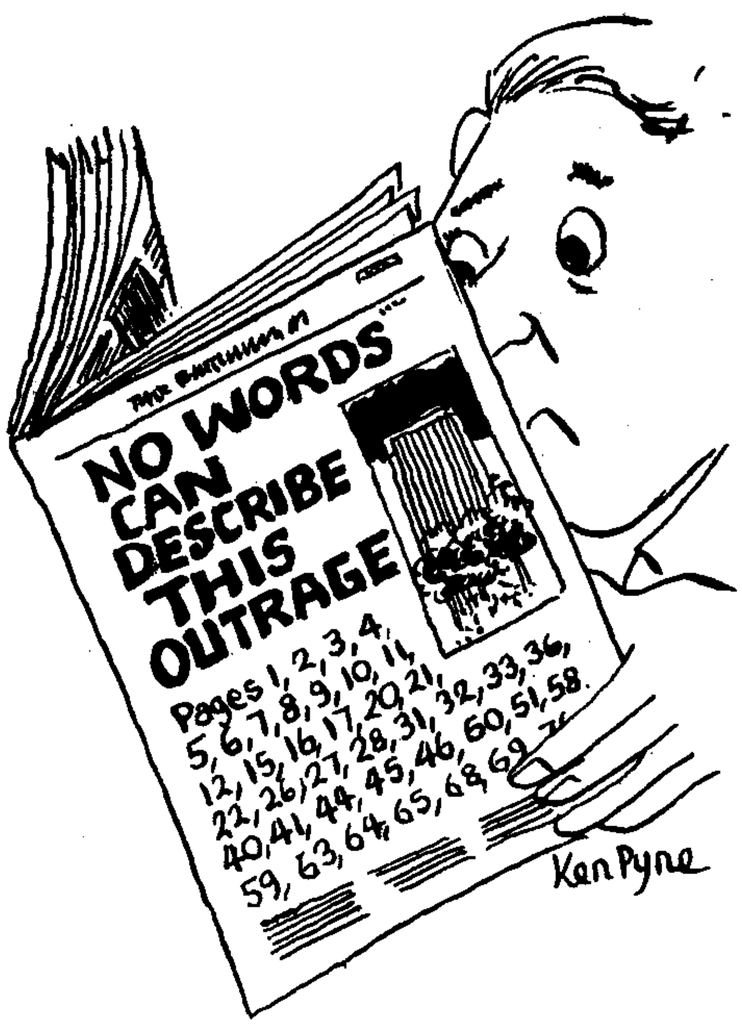
Asked by an Irish journalist what he would say if George Bush asked him what the difference was between the Provisional IRA and those responsible for the World Trade Center blasts, Gerry Adams replied that he didn't expect Bush to ask that sort of question. But, if he did, Gerry intoned gravely: "I would tell him that the IRA's guns have been silent for seven years."

Leaving aside what seems to be the current macabre contest between the Provos and their loyalist counterparts to shoot as many alleged miscreants as possible in Ulster, Adams' "seven years" claim means Canary Wharf didn't get blown up and the IRA didn't proudly claim responsibility for the blast.

It is possible that Gerry's Irish-American friends will accept that two financial tower blocks being bombed to pieces was all in the media's imagination as well... but so far the messages of continuing solidarity for Sinn Fein from Teddy Kennedy et al have failed to arrive.



Street Of Shame



"PURE journalism," drools Roy Greenslade in a lengthy *Grauniad* tribute to the brilliant reporting by Fleet Street of last week's events. Although "the *Guardian*'s superb 25-page coverage" naturally wins his highest praise, other triumphs are also celebrated – notably a brave effort by Piers "Morgan" Moron of the *Mirror*.

"I was at home in Sussex recuperating from a bad back when I got the news," Moron tells the *Guardian*. "I immediately decided to drive to the office but with the distraction of the news coming in I got lost a couple of times." Still, the plucky editor made it in the end. "The newsdesk, everybody, acted phenomenally well."

Some *Mirror* insiders beg to differ, claiming that Moron outraged sub-editors during the evening by switching the TV set over to coverage of his beloved Arsenal's European tie and giving a four-letter response to a couple of brave souls who dared to question his priorities. However, since there is no mention of any such incident in Piers's *Grauniad* interview we must assume that the story is entirely untrue, and that he was indeed the hero of the hour.

Is it too much to hope that his valour will be recognised at the *Mirror*'s next Pride of Britain awards?

ON 11 September the *Times Online*, the internet arm of the *Times*, emailed potential subscribers promising "News on American attack from *The Times*".

"Earlier today terrorists launched an attack on the Eastern seaboard of the United States using a number of hijacked planes," read the email. "*The Times* is continually updating its new Fast Times SMS service with the latest news as it happens. To find out how to sign up to the service click on the link below."

Granted finances are shaky in the dot-com world at present, but is it not slightly premature to start cashing in quite so quickly.

IN Kelvin MacKenzie's day the *Sun* might have reacted to the attack on New York by running pictures galore of topless women waving the Stars and Stripes, to demonstrate that the West will not give in to pressure from Taliban fundamentalists who believe that females should always be covered from head to toe.

The present regime at Wapping clearly feels differently. Since last Tuesday, any slavering fans who check the *Sun*'s website for gorgeous pouters will have found the following brief message: "Due to the terrible events in America we are suspending Page3.com for the time being. Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible."

THE *Grauniad* was forced to apologise for printing the deeply unpleasant description "vegetables", used by Malcolm Dean, the caring newspaper's sensitive society editor, when referring to autistic children.

The paper said: "The use of the word 'vegetable' in this context is deeply regretted by the writer of the piece, who understands why it was considered profoundly offensive by the parents of autistic children."

Dean, it seems, had simply taken a leaf from the *Guardian*'s sister paper, the *Observer*, in which an equally unsympathetic Jay Rayner had used the term "no-brainer" to describe parental concerns about MMR and autism for which he and his editor, Roger Alton, later apologised.

IN LAST Tuesday's *Daily Mail* Nigel Dempster launched yet another salvo at John McEntee, "my so-called 'diary' rival on the fast-sinking *Express*", thus reviving a bitter feud that began several years ago when McEntee infuriated Dumpster by failing to show enough sympathy on the death of Nigel's dog Tulip.

On arriving at the office on Tuesday morning Dempster read in the *Independent* that McEntee would shortly be leaving Dirty Desmond's *Express* to join, er, the *Daily Mail*. "Have you seen this?" Dumpster yelled hysterically at his deputy, Tim Walker. "It's not true, is it?" Walker had to admit that it was indeed. From November, McEntee will be writing a daily diary which will appear a few pages before Dumpster's own column. Hacks at the *Mail* interpret this as a first move towards the eventual jettisoning of Dumpster's pisspoor "diary" altogether.

Understandably distraught, Nigel then disappeared for a lengthy lunch which left him exceptionally tired and emotional. "Drunker than I've ever seen him," one colleague muttered, "and that's saying something." Perhaps the wretched Dumpster has never had quite so many sorrows to drown.

HACKWATCH

Apocalypse Now

AMID the chaos and confusion that followed last week's mass-slaughter in America, there were still some certainties to which hacks could cling gratefully.

"George Bush faced what may turn out to be the defining moments of his presidency yesterday." (Julian Borger, *Guardian*.) "On a personal and political level, this represents what may be the defining moment of the Bush presidency." (Duncan Campbell, *Guardian*.) "Mr Bush, after eight months, has been presented with the defining moment of his presidency." (Tim Hames, the *Times*.) And not only Bush, apparently. "I recognised it as a defining moment… when humanity moves into yet another sphere of savagery and darkness." (Philip Norman, *Daily Mail*.) "This was one of those defining moments of global experience and emotion." (Timothy Garton Ash, *Independent*.)

Another thing was certain. "History will never be the same again." (Mark Almond, *Daily Mail*.) "America will never be the same again." (Polly Toynbee, *Guardian*.) "The world would never be the same again." (Ian McEwan, *Guardian*.) "The world will never be the same again." (Simon Calder, *Independent*.) "Life in America, even the world, will never be the same again." (Editorial, *Independent*.) "This time, the cliché is true. America, after 11 September 2001, will never be the same again." (Rupert Cornwell, *Independent*.)

One can hardly blame the pundits for clutching at portentous clichés: since the story had already been amply conveyed in pictures, and hard facts about casualties and culprits were initially unavailable, what else could they do? However, there was one other way of filling the empty column-inches. As James Scott wrote in the *Daily Mirror*: "No thriller writer or film-maker could have dreamed that their wildest imaginings would come true in such appalling fashion." So the hacks decided to dream it for them.

"The scenario of a Tom Clancy thriller or Spielberg blockbuster was now unfolding live on the world's television screens." (Michael Gove, the *Times*.) "The attack was so audacious that few would have thought it plausible, beyond the plot of a Tom Clancy airport thriller." (Tim Ripley, *The Scotsman*.) "Events previously confined to Tom Clancy novels and Hollywood summer scare movies became the shattering, bewildering reality of an ordinary autumn morning." (Rupert Cornwell, *Independent*.)

If the event was a novel, it was undoubtedly by Clancy – though Mark Lawson of the *Grauniad* also mentioned Thomas Harris's book *Black Sunday*. But there was some scholarly disagreement as to which movie it was most like.

"The images have the unreal quality of a Hollywood movie because we have seen it all before so often – tidal waves, terrorists, aliens, Russians, *Godzilla*, *King Kong*, *Die Hard*, *Armageddon*." (Polly Toynbee, *Guardian*.) "*Apocalypse Now* and *The Towering Inferno* all rolled into one: the ultimate American nightmare." (Mary Dejevsky, *Independent*.) "Like *Armageddon*, *Death Wish* and *The Towering Inferno* rolled into one." (*Sun* editorial.) "Something that a screenwriter might describe as *Towering Inferno* times two." (James Bone, the *Times*.) "From 9am onwards yesterday, for the US capital's numbed and uncomprehending populace, the movie *Independence Day* seemed about to be re-enacted before their eyes." (Rupert Cornwell, *Independent*.) "It was impossible not to feel that we were in a scene from a Schwarzenegger film." (David Usborne, *Independent*.) "We had seen this all before… *Armageddon*. *The Towering Inferno*. *Independence Day*." (Jenny Johnston, *Daily Mirror*.) "The Hollywood comparisons were unavoidable. The sight of the half-destroyed WTC reminded me of the scene in *Independence Day* when an alien warship blows up the White House, or the scene in *Die Hard* when terrorists plant explosives in a Los Angeles building." (Chris Ayres, the *Times*.) "Only this summer there was *Pearl Harbor*, the movie. Not to mention *Independence Day*. Somehow even so shocking a spectacle as the destruction of the World Trade Centre had something familiar about it. Was it in *Die Hard* that we saw it? Or was it *Godzilla*?" (Niall Ferguson, *Independent*.) "In the image of the tower's stump – a lattice of distinctive ogee arches – an echo arose of the ending of the original *Planet of the Apes*." (Thomas Sutcliffe, *Independent*.)

Only Ian McEwan in the *Guardian* resisted the comparisons, arguing that "the colossal explosions, the fierce black and red clouds, the crowds running through the streets, the contradictory, confusing information, had only the feeblest resemblance to the tinny dramas of *Skyscraper*, *Backdraft* or *Independence Day*." Er, quite: why dilute the enormity of what actually happened by treating it as some kind of Hollywood fantasy? Perhaps hacks and editors share the opinion first propounded by an even more distinguished writer than Tom Clancy: that humankind cannot bear very much reality. Full marks to the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*, then, for trying to bring the horror down to a more acceptable level. Its billboards on 12 September carried the magnificently parochial headline: "US ATTACKS: BLACKBURN STUDENT'S PLANE GROUNDED."

SPY STORY

AN interesting defence by *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger of his decision to run interminable extracts from the memoirs of former spymistress Stella Rimington: "There are no great secrets in it," he told Sky News, "and that is the irony after all this fuss."

In which case, many indignant *Grauniad* hacks are asking, why shell out £100,000 for a book which had already been rejected by almost every other newspaper in Fleet Street on the grounds that it was utterly tedious and unrevealing?

Even on the first day of the paper's Stella-mania – launched with a huge fanfare on the front page and a 5,000-word interview inside – Rusbridger effectively sabotaged his own hype with a curious editorial attacking those who accused Rimington of reckless indiscretion. "Dame Stella's book is – literally – harmless," it boasted. "Not remotely damaging to the intelligence services. Quite the opposite… Dame Stella played her book by the book, submitting the manuscript for vetting and removing the passages she was asked to remove." Enticing, eh? No wonder most readers decided they had better things to do with their time than wade through the dreary daily instalments.

Even more risible is Rubbisher's claim that Rimington's book is a breakthrough for openness and honesty about the security services. Her occasional comments on the work of MI5 – sandwiched between pap about her clothes, her children, etc – range from the disingenuous to the downright dishonest. As she admitted in her famous Dimbleby lecture seven years ago: "A cynic may ask: How can I know that what you're saying is true? Well, it is difficult."

It certainly is. Dealing with Peter "Spycatcher" Wright's claim of a conspiracy against Harold Wilson by some MI5 officers, she writes: "Wright later withdrew the allegation, admitting, in a *Panorama* programme in 1988, that what the book said about the so-called 'plot' was not true. However, as is always the way of these things, his retraction went almost unnoticed, and the untrue allegation stuck in some circles and remains in currency to this day." Rimington first peddled this story in her Dimbleby lecture on 12 June 1994. It was exploded three days later by a newspaper which dug out the *Panorama* transcript and quoted it at length. What Wright actually said was he and about eight other spooks intended to confront Wilson with his MI5 file and tell him that "we wanted him to resign. That there would be no publicity if he just quietly went". He added that the scheme had been "deadly serious". The newspaper which pointed all this out was, er, the *Grauniad*.

Rimington's account of her role in the miners' strike of 1984-5, faithfully and uncritically reproduced in the *Grauniad*'s serialisation, is equally misleading – as, once again, the *Guardian* of all newspapers really ought to know. As long ago as last October it published a long feature by Seumas Milne noting that under Rimington's supervision MI5 infiltrated Arthur Scargill's inner circle, oversaw the country's largest-ever bugging and telephone-tapping effort in cooperation with GCHQ, coordinated the legal onslaught against the NUM and helped organise the strike-breaking effort.

But, Milne added, "little, if any, of this can be expected to surface in whatever of Rimington's memoirs see the light of day. Even less likely to be included is an account of her close cooperation with David Hart, millionaire confidant of Thatcher and Portillo, who played a key role in organising and financing the dissident back-to-work movement." Sure enough, you will search the book in vain for any mention of Hart – or of Roger Windsor, the NUM chief executive who was later named as an undercover MI5 agent, sent in to destabilise the union.

Although Rimington's book is wittily titled *Open Secret*, Alan Rusbridger has ended up paying £100,000 for 300 pages of vacuous twaddle. He can't say that he wasn't warned. On 18 May last year the *Guardian*'s own intelligence expert, Richard Norton-Taylor, wrote that Dame Stella's autobiography might seem "a rare opportunity to find out the truth about what the security service has been up to. But it will be nothing of the kind… Her memoirs, if they do see print, will by definition be sanitised, approved in secret by a coterie of Whitehall insiders dedicated to suppressing the truth. Is she going to be allowed to, does she even want to, reveal what MI5 was up to during the 1984-5 miners' strike, or in Northern Ireland, or spying on so-called 'subversives'? Hardly."

And so it proved.

MAINTAINING their usual high standard of show-business gossip, the *Mirror*'s 3am girls report that pop chanteuse Sophie Ellis-Bextor has ambitions to sing with the Beatles.

"I'd like to get together with Paul, Ringo and the other one. We could call it Sophie Ellis-Bextor featuring the Beatles," she was quoted as saying in the *Moron* on 4 September. Shame the quote was lifted from a spoof article about Ms E-B in *New Musical Express*.

THE Eurosceptic *Telegraph* carried an intriguing letter recently from a reader in Paris concerning France's attitude to the asylum seekers trying to enter Britain from Calais.

It claimed, among other things, that had Britain signed the Schengen agreement on open borders, France would now be obliged to take back all refugees who cross the Channel illegally.

If that point wasn't Europhile enough for editor Charles Moore, he must have swallowed hard when he saw that the letter had been written by one Suce M'abit. Say that out loud, of course, and it sounds uncannily like *Suce ma bite* – which is French for *Suck my dick.*

THE new-look *Indescribablyboring on Sunday* has an exciting feature in which readers email the paper's specialist correspondents with questions which are then answered in the paper.

Last week it was the turn of labour editor Barrie Clement to answer readers' concerns about employment matters. One wrote to say he'd got food poisoning from the office canteen and asked if his employer was liable. Another wondered what he could do about being abused by a bullying boss. A third asked if employers are obliged to negotiate with a trade union.

By amazing coincidence the current issue of the *Indie*'s National Union of Journalists chapel newsletter addresses three issues of great concern to the paper's hacks: the appalling food in the canteen, the senior executive ("editor-at-large" Janet Street-Porter) who is in the habit of calling people "cunts", and the failure of Independent Newspapers (prop: "Sir" Tony O'Relli) to recognise the NUJ…

JUST FANCY THAT!

"So, the mother country of football, birthplace of the greatest game, has finally gone from the cradle to the shame. We've sold our birthright down the fjord to a nation of seven million skiers and hammer throwers who spend half their lives in darkness."

JEFF POWELL, *Daily Mail*, November 2, 2000

"England are back. Back with such a vengeance that our bright young men and their courteous Swedish manager may indeed have changed the face of the game."

JEFF POWELL, *Daily Mail*, September 3, 2001

IN THE world of advertising, always open to new ideas, the collapse of the WTC towers was not just a catastrophe but… an opportunity.

A mere 24 hours after the world's worst-ever terrorist attack, Kevin Roberts, CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide, sat down at his desk on the 16th floor of the company's New York office to write a letter to the Saatchi & Saatchi "family".

He began in suitably bleak mood: "The sky is black with smoke, the streets are quiet except for rescue vehicles' sirens, our building is cordoned off. The feeling is one of overwhelming emptiness." But it was not long before he got down to business. "Only by developing and expressing ideas will New York, America and the World rebuild; for rebuild it must. Saatchi & Saatchi people are passionate, competitive and restless. We are Ideas people. We have much to contribute," he wrote, going on to expound how two of the company's key principle's, Peak Performance and Lovemarks, whatever they may be, are the way forward for a devastated America.

He concluded in sombre tone: "New York will rebuild. America will recover. The World will rebound. We can help."

THERE was much talk about the need for a "proportionate response" to last week's terrorist attacks in America. And what could be more proportionate than the response of Nicholas Longo, chief executive of the highly reputable CoffeeCup software company?

Soon after the assault on the World Trade Centre he emailed no fewer than 1.3 million customers with the following message:

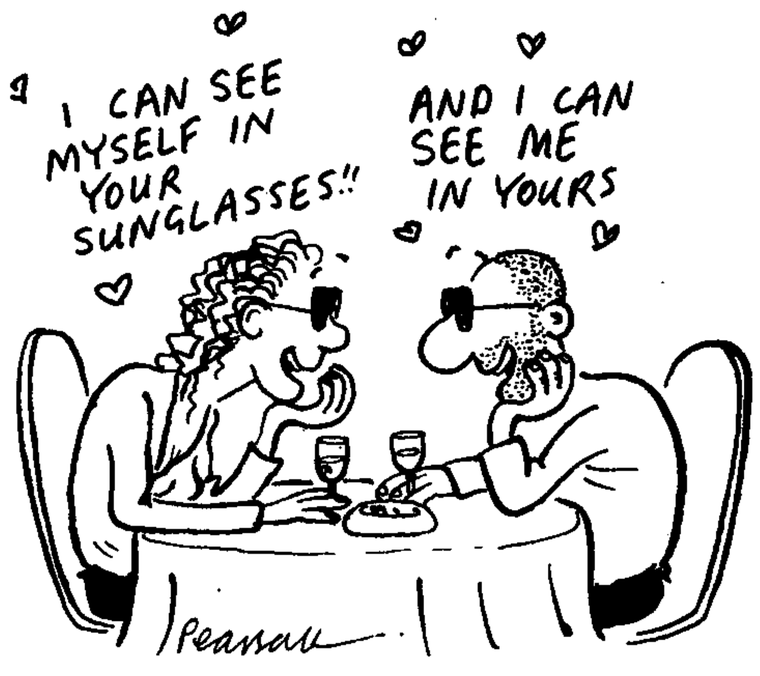
"Hello everyone… The Team at CoffeeCup would like to send our heartfelt sorrow to those that perished in these attacks. We would like to also say on record that if any country is found responsible for these attacks, we call for that country's complete destruction and annihilation."

ONE of the most heartfelt responses to events in the US comes from France One Call, a company providing information about the availability of self-catering properties in France, which works in conjunction with holiday brochures including "Best of France" and P&O Portsmouth's "Follow the Sun".

Potential advertisers have received an email from the firm asking: "Will acts of terrorism effect [sic.] bookings? Events in the USA and the potential repercussions could effect the number of people choosing to travel on ferries, planes and trains."

Paul Herbert of France One Call explains in the email that the company has decided to extend the print run of its various publications in the light of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. "This is a precautionary measure to ensure that our advertisers gain the maximum from their advertising should world events take a turn for the worse," writes Mr Herbert, demonstrating quite clearly where his firm's priorities lie.

CELEBRITY LOVE



TONY BLAIR's swift decision to ban air traffic from flying over the centre of London, following the New York massacre, represents a most remarkable U-turn.

Time and again in recent years backbench MPs and people living under the Heathrow flight path have warned that a collision or aircraft failure over the metropolis would have catastrophic consequences; but their fears have been consistently dismissed by the know-alls in the Civil Aviation Authority and department of transport.

Exactly a year ago, for instance, two jets carrying 700 passengers came within 10 seconds of colliding in mid-air directly above central London. "Take urgent avoiding action now!" frantic air traffic controllers yelled at the pilots, averting what would have been Britain's worst ever air disaster. Yet the CAA's only comment afterwards was a blithe assurance that "the safety of the aircraft was not compromised".

Jeopardising the lives of countless London residents is apparently an acceptable risk – but endangering the prime minister is not. And so, as soon as there's a possibility of a crazed pilot directing an airliner at No 10 or the Palace of Westminster, official policy is changed forthwith.

It remains to be seen if Blair will notice the connection between this issue and the rapacious appetite of the British Airports Authority (BAA) and international airlines for further expansion at Heathrow airport. Until now most campaigners have assumed that the enormous clout of the big airlines would ensure that Terminal 5 was given the go-ahead. (It was, of course, the same airlines who prevailed on the US government to minimise security and safety measures on domestic routes.) But the aviation industry's plans for Heathrow would put intense pressure on the government and the CAA to restore flight paths from east to west across the centre of London, to maximise the profitable use of limited runway space and time-slots. Is the PM really prepared to take on these powerful interests?

PROFESSOR Roy Anderson is the man who dreamed up the "statistical model" which allowed Tony Blair to claim that foot-and-mouth would be over by 7 June this year. Though he has never replied to the *Eye*'s criticisms of his work, the Prof and his colleagues at Imperial College were furious to see an item in the scientific journal *Nature* suggesting they had been slow to reveal how they justified their prediction that the epidemic would end just in time for the Rev Blair's desired election date.

Not so, he thundered in a letter to *Nature* last week. Full details of the research and methodology were presented to "stakeholders" on 23 March.

To the untrained eye, "stakeholders" might seem to mean anyone who was affected by the foot-and-mouth crisis, ie just about everyone. For Anderson, however, the stakeholders turn out to be the MAFFia, the Office of Science and Technology and the Food Standards Agency. Not the farmers or general public – and still less the scientific community, which might have had a few comments to make on the professor's ingenious "modelling techniques".

LORD Sainsbury, the science minister, showed his usual grasp of environmental issues when he appointed Christopher Andrews to the board of the National Environment Research Council at the end of August.

The council spends £192m a year funding research, proclaiming that its "priority for environmental science is to understand and predict the complex behaviour of the earth system and its sustainable development". Andrews recently retired as chairman and managing director of chemical firm Rhodia Limited, whose slogan doesn't sound that green. It trades under the banner: "Improving everyday life… inventing the future with chemistry".

Unsurprisingly its recent contributions to "the earth system" and "sustainable development" include a few nasty cases of pollution. This April it released sulphur trioxide from its sulphuric acid plant at Staveley, Derbyshire. Three policemen and a television camera worker had to be treated in hospital.

In December 1999 it was fined £13,000 for two incidents the previous year when it released poisonous mercury from Staveley. Rhodia's defence, when prosecuted by the Environment Agency, was that it had no previous convictions. It forgot to mention that Rhodia's former parent company, Rhone-Poulenc, which ran Staveley until 1998 and employed Christopher Andrews, did have a pollution record: in 1996 it was fined £50,000 for an acid gas release from the site.

Lord Sainsbury notes approvingly that Andrews "was also actively involved in the work of the Chemical Industries Association". The association, trade body for the big chemical manufacturers, tirelessly lobbies against environmental regulation of the industry.

NO MP speaks more ardently for the private finance initiative (PFI) and public/private partnership (PPP) than the incomparably loyal member for Swindon South, Julia Drown.

She argues repeatedly that, thanks to PFI, her government has managed to build all sorts of new hospitals. But what about queue-jumping? Does she think people should get quicker treatment in NHS hospitals because their firms are paying for it? That seems to be the point behind a scheme announced recently by the Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust, which looks after a lot of Julia Drown's constituents.

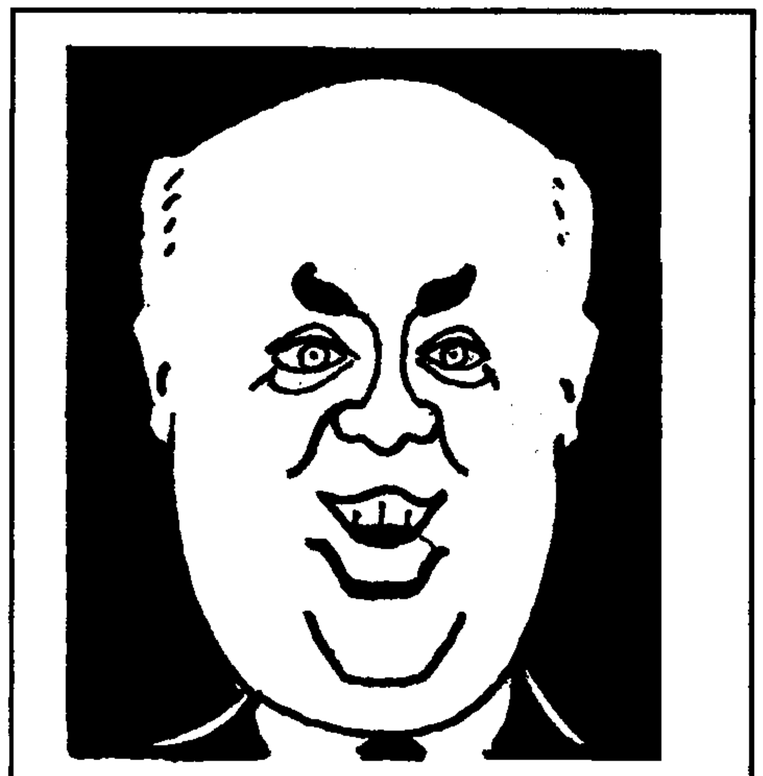
The trust is inviting companies to pay for the right of their staff to jump waiting lists for NHS treatment. By this device the trust hopes to raise an extra £400,000 a year. The trust's special manager for private practice, Sue Harvey, is quoted in the local paper as saying: "The government is very keen for the NHS to market the health service through the private public partnership service." Yes, but what about the queue-jumping?

Swindon Trades Council is not impressed and argues: "This is as far as we are aware the first instance of a trust offering to organise queue-jumping for businesses for a financial contribution. Such a policy would mark the abandonment of one of the fundamental principles at the heart of the NHS." What does the MP think? She will have every chance to give her views soon, for she sits on the Commons health select committee which has just announced its first big inquiry of the new parliament: "The role of the private sector in the NHS."

DIGBY JONES, head of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), recently complained that the department of trade and industry (DTI) wasn't close enough to business. "Frankly, we do need much more championing of the business message within government," he told Radio Four.

He had obviously forgotten that 112 members of staff at the DTI are not only on the side of businesses but actually employed by private firms. They are all "inward secondees" who work for the civil service for free while taking a salary from their old employer.

The cabinet office told the *Eye* that the latest figures, for 1999-2000, show that there were 1,130 "inward secondees" working in the civil service as a whole for at least three months – often for more than a year – while being paid by their private employers.



"I am going to win the next election – for Tony Blair"

The interchange unit's guidance sells the scheme to business as a way of "building up networks of contacts" and "developing a long term relationship". The DTI's privately funded staff included Alan Baldwin of BT, acting as a "telecoms consultant" to the civil service from July 1999 to April 2001. Paul Lazenby of Vodafone is to work in the DTI's communication industries section for the next two years; and Anna Lawson of Ericsson spent a year in the DTI as a "technical adviser on issues relating to the mobile communications industry".

In an imaginative pairing Mark Jennings of British American Tobacco spent a year in the DTI as an "export promoter" – selling fags to Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania – while Roger Johnson of the British Association of Healthcare Industries worked for the DTI as an "export promoter" of healthcare.

LABOUR'S RICH LIST

WHY remain a full-time MEP when you can make so much money outside? Many in the north-east were perplexed when Alan Donnelly suddenly abandoned his post as leader of Labour's Euro-MPs. Now we have a clue as to the reason.

Mr Donnelly was an early investor in a new get-rich-quick high tech company called Just2Clicks. The company operated "business-to-business internet portals, enabling companies in sectors such as cement, pulp and paper, electric power, and oil and gas to buy and sell products". The company has stopped trading, but that isn't a tragedy for Mr Donnelly. Like other directors, he was allowed to buy shares at a tiny fraction of the advertised share price. He put in £1,250, and will collect £400,000.

WHY was Vanni Treves, a City lawyer, made chairman of the nationalised Channel Four Television?

Could his appointment have had anything to do with his long association with Labour, or even his recent donation to the party? It was not very much, just over £1,000, but probably enough.

MEANWHILE, what has happened to Treves's predecessor as chairman of the doomed insurance giant, Equitable Life? Poor Chris Headdon was only chairman for six months when he left in some sadness, probably because of his firm's plunging fortunes.

His pension when he left was only £94,000 a year and he had to endure a bonus of only £1,000 a week for the year 2000. Mr Headdon was not sad for long, however. Within a month of his departure from Equitable he was appointed to the board of the Halifax – which had just taken over Equitable Life.

'Backbiter'

FTVE

The terrorist attacks on America (all channels)

THIS IS not going to be easy, but it behoves any honest viewer to concede that the plane crashing into the world's fourth tallest building last week was one of television's greatest moments. It also needs saying that the interminable glut of so-called news that followed in the days after – and is still gushing forth like a burst main – has at times been television at its very worst.

First, the sensational stuff: rarely has anyone ever seen anything like the two hours of footage that was beamed live to a disbelieving world on Tuesday 11 September. It was apocalypse, history, change - all the big words - unfurling before our very eyes, and every channel everywhere was not shy to say so. The I-was-there frisson brought offices and bars to a standstill, although of course none of us here *was* there - we just watched it on the box. Regardless, it was (and again, one shudders to say it) the apogee of live television, showing us not just that these astonishing events were happening, but that they were happening one after another, now.

Fairly quickly we knew what had happened: four planes had been hijacked, two crashed into the World Trade Center, one hit the Pentagon and the other came down in Pittsburgh. Then the twin towers collapsed. Countless people died, and beyond that, for days, no one could say any more. This is not to be facetious. This is to state all that we knew for sure at the time.

The term "news" comes from "new things". After the initial maelstrom, there were very few new things to report. Analysis too was in short supply; not least because when someone decides to fly a plane into a populated building very few commentators can begin to posit why. The only realistic response, as thousands of incredulous viewers tacitly testified, was no response. But dead air is anathema to rolling news, and it's one of the many pernicious legacies of Ted Turner's CNN that news should never stop. Last Tuesday was proof that if it doesn't, at times perhaps it should.

CNN has developed a number of tools to distract us from the realisation that rolling news is made up of strong images, hot air and conjectural trimmings. Their cross-sensual bombardment consists of a ticker, captions, a voice-over, a talking-head and very often a second subordinate screen-in-a-screen. To take in all of the information available in every frame would require a second head, so every aspect of the *son et lumiere* repeats incessantly. You can absorb it all, if you want, in about 20 minutes viewing. In other words, a traditional newscast every half-hour or so would serve just as well, and it would come with the advantage of the newscasters having had some time to consider what they are about to say. Thanks to CNN and its imitators, if the defining image of this disaster is the plane hitting the skyscraper, the signal sound is incontinent and repetitive blabbering, leading viewers to ever higher levels of anguish.

Rolling news, of course, has to keep rolling. And it was CNN who started all this back in the Gulf War. Others duly followed, the idea being that if you had a news programme on all the time, you'd never miss a story. But once the story's broken, the result is repetitious cataclysmic wallpaper that refuses to pause for thought. In this instance, British viewers who didn't have CNN got similar fodder courtesy of Sky News, which in turn shipped in its shock pics from the US Fox Network. Sky overlaid Fox's captions ("America Under Attack") with ours ("Terrorists Attack America") and dreamt up more wasted words to go with more repeated footage.

Yet for all their prominence in events like this, cable news channels we can take or leave. Of greater concern is their influence on terrestrial news reporting. The desire for more and still more meant that the BBC's response to the tragedy was to do as CNN does, wheeling in the pisspoor BBC News 24 digital team to fill every conceivable hole. This was precisely the time for some disciplined reporting and sensible comment, yet the cable fallacy that news cannot stop left the Beeb ad libbing with the rest of them. Perhaps it would have been tactless to drop the story, but on the day itself the BBC did not begin to regain its broadcasting composure until David Dimbleby was wheeled on later in the evening.

Then came the mawkishness, meaning Jeremy Bowen, a serious foreign reporter in a former life, reading out saccharine emails on the BBC's *Breakfast* programme to appease the maudlin majority. ITV too had gone heavy on the sentiment, ending its evening broadcast with a schmaltzy montage of images such as a dusty doll in an upturned fireman's helmet. Stiff-upper-lips nationwide gave the briefest quiver, but exactly what this sort of mulch contributed to serious, useful reportage was unclear. On a day when the public were pleading for some clarity, national television chose to take the CNN route.

'The Zapper'

GOING LIVE

THE enormity of events in New York City stretched the resources of live broadcasters to the limit.

Some reporters, like Jackie Brambles on GMTV, accidentally revealed the effects of cost-cutting on research resources. "According to the latest I'm receiving from the *Los Angeles Times*", she said while struggling to find a ringed headline. But to be fair, facts were few and far between.

The low point came when an ABC crew corralled a desperate family hoping to find news of a missing loved one. The camera followed them to a police line where they were stopped by an "unfeeling" cop who would not let them through. "But officer – this lady hasn't heard from her husband," said the reporter as the camera panned accusingly on to him. "Sir, I haven't heard from my wife either," came the unexpected reply.

Another ABC crew asked a traumatised survivor: "Was there blood?" She reacted angrily by lifting her skirt to reveal a cut on her leg.

I SKY SPECIAL

New York and Washington hit by terrorists

Two aircraft have crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City, while a third airplane has crashed into the Pentagon in Washington as well.

The Pentagon, the White House and all the main government offices in Washington have been evacuated.

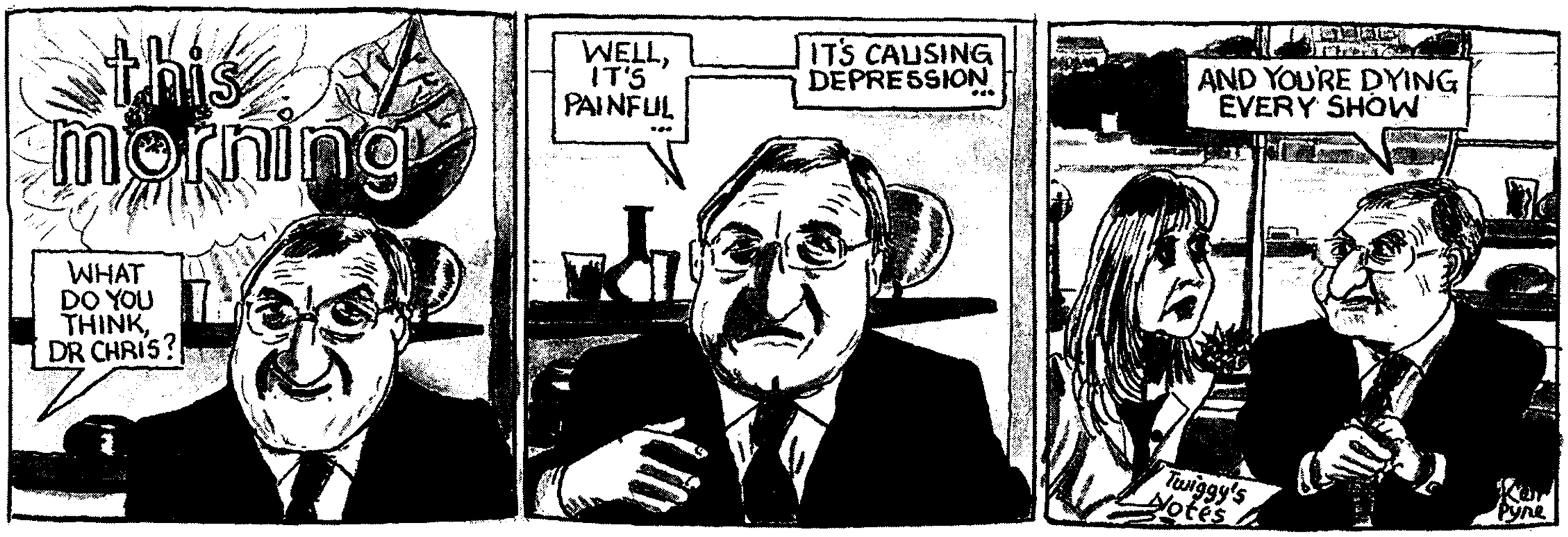
Sky News reported that six people may be dead and at least 1,000 injuries from the New York explosions.

— From the *Times* website, 11 September.

"A Sky spokeswoman said they had brought the first pictures to the UK thanks to a feed from sister channel Fox News.

"A spokeswoman said: "We beat all the other British broadcasters. Even Tony Blair was watching us to get his information."

— From the *Sun*, page 27, 12 September.



MEDIA NEWS

IN COMMON with media outlets around the globe, the front page of the BBC's online news service on 13 September was almost wholly taken up with reporting the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the US. But there was one other important story the Beeb deemed worthy of news headlines.

The world-changing event in question was culture secretary Tessa Jowell's decision to give the go-ahead for three new BBC digital channels, while turning down proposals for a BBC3. Perhaps Auntie thought this digital revelation would lift the public mood.

CULTURE secretary Tessa Jowell's refusal to approve the Beeb's proposed digital channel BBC3, reveals at long last the government's unease that digital output could marginalise the BBC's "total service".

She's right. Projects like BBC3 and BBC4 are *heavily dependent* on "channel demographics" and are designed to cater for closely identified, specific *audiences* – not the licence-payers who fund all this unwatched tosh.

In a recent "ideas meeting" for a new "satirical" show planned for BBC3, excited hacks gibbered about creating "a combination of *Private Eye* and *South Park"* aimed at "the channel's demographic audience of 18 to 24". So much for "total" service.

It was only after anguished, fog horn-like protests from noted satirist John Sweeney, 43, that they agreed to up their age range. "The over 35s are a bunch of selfish shits anyway," explained one young cove.

"WHERE do BBC One want to be?" is the big question at the top of a presentation pack for BBC suits. It wants to be "the UK's Most Enjoyable Channel", "relevant to our lives," "still a quality channel, but" – note that word – "friendly and welcoming".

Alarm bells are already ringing at TVC that this means more *Celebrity Cook Your Own Pet*-type garbage in peak time and of course more soap.

The strategy? "To hire the hip names: Johnny Vaughan, Ian Wright", both of whom can look forward to even vaster cheques that they already pocket. They will "deliver a younger, irreverent tone" and "develop edgy formats with real people and their concerns".

ONE of the candidates being grilled to take over as chairman of the BBC is John Ashworth, the former chairman of the British Library and non-executive director of Granada Television since 1987.

Ashworth is not a favourite for the job (Gavyn Davies is now in pole position following David Dimbleby's embarrassment over the anti-American tone of last week's *Question Time*) but his appointment would surely be welcomed by BBC chiefs hoping to fill their own pockets.

As the *Eye* has reported over the years, Ashworth has considerable experience of fat-cattery. In 1998 he was a member of the remuneration committee at Granada which proposed paying the company directors £375,000 in compensation for shortening the length of their contracts from three to two years (*Eye* 944). At Sainsbury's, where he also sat on the remuneration committee, one director, David Bremner, was given £455,000 on top of his salary in 1997 shortly after joining the supermarket chain, while another, David Quarmby, was given a £336,000 goodbye present when he left plus an extra £556,000 towards his pension (*Eye* 945).

As non-executive chairman of the British Library, Ashworth not only campaigned to charge readers fees but also awarded a £1.3m contract to supply sandwiches to the library to Sutcliffe Catering, a subsidiary of Granada, run by his old pal Gerry Robinson (*Eyes* 954 & 958).

AD NAUSEAM

MUCH soul-searching in adland this last month due to the sudden preponderance of ads portraying men as feckless bozos.

Soho's contribution to the gender debate was sparked by a recent McCann-Erickson Gold Blend ad that had a woman tethering her man to the ground: a notable change of tack from the infamous slimey couple who smouldered at each other for years in the world's greatest freeze-dried pot-boiler. All the agency chat wondered whether we hadn't had enough of blokes begging for the sexual favours (cf Gossard's ineffable bedroom farce "On Your Knees"), while girls drove the cars, told the bawdy jokes and downed the pints.

A fascinating debate, but a pointless one: any random ad break will reveal that sex still sells. It just depends what kind of sex, and what you want to sell.

In the case of anything involving women and chocolate, never discount fellatio. Cadbury's Flake advertising has long centred on a suck-it-and-see strategy; Lowe Lintas did its creative rep little good with work for Magnum ice-creams earlier this year that had a honey gleaming at a choccy-lolly with rapturous intent; and now our friends at TBWA are to be found paying lip-service to limp libidos with new posters for the launch of Cadbury's Snowflake.

Anyone concerned about the plight of Men's Lib need only consider this sorry offering, which has a blonde sucking said flake with the line: "How much would you like this girl's job?"

● BE you copper or thug, London ad agency M&C Saatchi is your one-stop shop for advertising on every side of the law. Its police recruitment ads (featuring Patsy Palmer et al) have recently begun a second showing, after what it claimed was a massively successful first burst, but oops!... The renewed plugging of all things plod happens to have coincided with a slap on the wrists from none other than the Police Federation itself.

M&C's new batch of posters for Thomas Pink, ambitious Jermyn Street shirtmakers in search of barrow-boy kudos, features Kray cronies Tony Lambrianou and Freddie "The Undertaker" Foreman looking tough and wearing shirts. Apparently, the delightful pairing bring to the campaign an aura of what M&C calls "geezer chic", as well as more than 30 years in jail and a history of violent convictions.

Tony and Freddie were of course paid handsomely for their bespattered pasts, although just how much of the £1m campaign went to the heavies M&C declined to say. Presumably because, as the Police Federation pointed out, "Criminals should not profit from their crimes, or be allowed to use their notoriety for financial gain." And, it could be added, M&C should not be allowed to use those criminals' notoriety for what is ultimately its financial gain.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Dirty Harry Potter

DUMB BRITAIN

See Hear Saturday, BBC2

Question: Which British nurse was shot as a spy by the Germans in the First World War?

Contestant: Florence Nightingale.

LK Today, GMTV

Lorraine Kelly: How many days in a leap year?

Contestant: 253.

Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which member of the royal family appeared on the 200th edition of *A Question Of Sport*?

Contestant: Ricky Tomlinson.

Steve Penk Breakfast Show, Virgin Radio

Steve Penk (*oily*): What is the name of the French-speaking Canadian state?

Contestant: America? Portugal? Canada? Mexico? Italy? Spain?

If your home caught fire, what would be the one thing you would save?

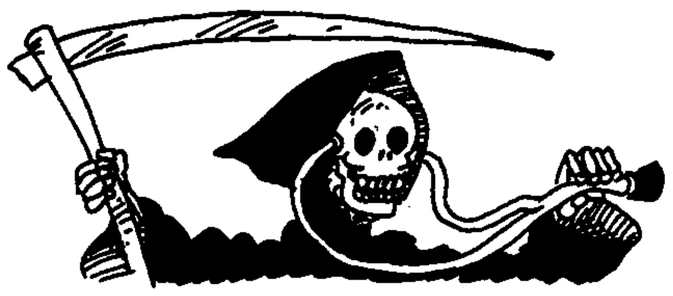
'My photographs. I have lots of them framed and tons in boxes, all of which I label anally.'

Kirsty Gallagher questionnaire in Marie Claire

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

KATE MOSS IN HOSPITAL AFTER HER CAR ACCIDENT...
HMM.....WE'LL NEED TO HAVE A CLOSE LOOK AT YOUR SHOULDER BONE
YOU MEAN AN X-RAY?
NO, THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY



DOING THE ROUNDS

SO MUCH for the Commission for Health Improvement's tardy report into appalling heart and lung transplant failings at London's St George's hospital. Its "no individual blame" approach is in stark contrast to the "name and shame" Bristol tragedy — but is it any more likely to prevent repetition?

It took CHI almost a year to reach its conclusions, mocking "new" Labour's promise of a rapid response to NHS failings. The doctors as a whole were praised for the speed with which the problem was addressed, but why did it take eight deaths?

Statistically it can be hard to differentiate between an unlucky run and avoidable tragedy until you notch up a few failures, but why was no one analyzing individual cases? Surely just one wrong patient given the wrong operation should be enough to send the balloon up?

As soon as a patient died, it appears everyone lost interest. CHI found that very few deaths were referred for post mortem and the few that were done were not always adequate. Too little effort was made to understand why patients were dying to prevent recurrence.

CHI's other findings were depressingly familiar. The unit was run down and dirty, there was a lack of effective clinical leadership, the chief executive and clinical director were kept in the dark until well after the problem was spotted, patient records weren't kept properly, there was little evidence of informed consent, the unit's own criteria for transplants were ignored and there was no 24-hour cover for transplant coordination. These failings alone should have debarred the hospital from conducting heart transplants without waiting for the results. But only the NHS could let leaderless surgeons perform the most complex, expensive surgery in a crumbling shit-hole.

● CHI was also unimpressed by patient access at the casualty department at Basildon and Thurrock general hospitals trust. Patients face serious admission delays and serious breeches of dignity, respect and confidentiality once inside. The trust chief executive is Sue Jennings, who received a CBE for her work as chief of NPAT — the national patient access team. The trust also has "serious problems discharging patients" and "high death rates for patients admitted with heart attacks".

● "NEW" Labour's promised upheaval of the ludicrously unfair merit award system for consultants has still not born fruit. The perception that white, male consultants in high prestige specialities are favoured over the rest has not been helped by the treatment of Dr Mohamed Nasr, the sole consultant in charge of the genito-urinary medicine clinic at Salisbury Healthcare Trust.

Dr Nasr has built the service up and is very committed to his patients despite an ever-increasing workload. These qualities are precisely what health secretary Alan Milburn claims he wishes to see recognized; but Dr Nasr has been repeatedly turned down for even the lowest award and suffered numerous character assassinations. In desperation he turned to an employment tribunal who regarded the case as "falling into the worst category of racial discrimination" and said Dr Nasr had been "humiliated in a very public way" by the trust. He was awarded £18,000 damages.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

WHEN it turned out that Professor Roy Anderson's computer hadn't brought the foot and mouth epidemic to an end by July after all, and that new outbreaks were still popping up in Northumberland, Leicestershire and heaven knows where, the department for the environment, food and rural affairs (Defra) announced in panic that it was planning to introduce all sorts of draconian new licensing regulations to prevent farmers moving their stock around.

Since this will make it even harder for farmers to earn a living, it was quite important for them to know what these changes might be.

Ben Garratt, who runs a pedigree herd of Blonde D'Aquitaine cattle near Ashford in Kent, first learned about the new restrictions when he was reading the 32-page August edition of Defra's *FMD Update* (including a particularly exciting section on grouse-shooting). The ministry was hoping to have its new licensing system firmly in place in September, presumably when the Great Caravanner Mrs Beckett finally got back from her holidays. But as yet there were no further details.

Nevertheless, Mr Garratt was pleased to note that the "latest information" was available from Defra's FMD helpline, which happened to be on a number up in Cumbria ("which I knew already"). He told his partner, a doctor who needed the telephone for her own work, that he would just make "a quick call" and she could then have the phone. When, after 10 minutes, he finally got through to "Julie" in Cumbria, she said she couldn't advise how the new rules would affect Kent, but suggested he should ring his divisional veterinary office in Reigate, Surrey.

She gave him the number ("which I knew already") and a switchboard operator explained, "very slowly", that no one in that office could help. Mr Garratt should try Defra's FMD experts for the south-east in Chelmsford, Essex. But since Mr Garratt is acquainted with most of the vets at Reigate, he asked to be put through anyway. The duty vet told him he knew nothing about any proposals to change movement licences, but suggested Mr Garratt should try Reading, Berks, where there was a whole department dealing with that sort of thing ("definitely not Chelmsford").

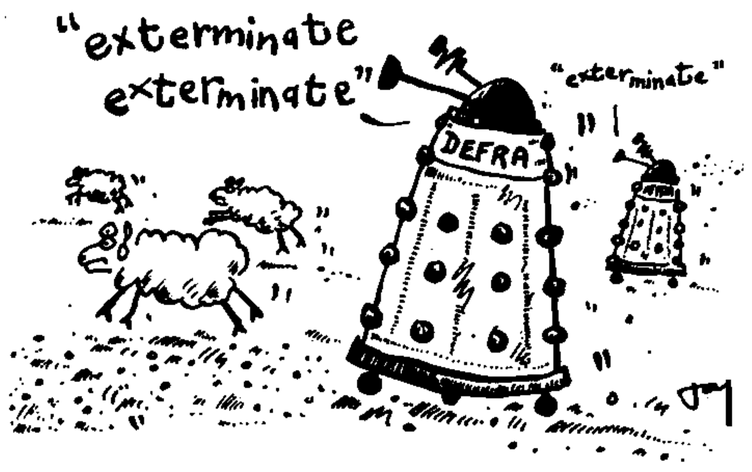
Mr Garratt was given the number ("which I knew already") and was eventually put through to a man in the licensing department who said he didn't know anything about new proposals from HQ, but why didn't Mr Garratt speak to the people who actually make the policy, who are up in Glasgow?

A chap in Glasgow said he knew of no new proposals for movement licences, but probably the best way for Mr Garratt to keep in touch was to ring the FMD helpline in Cumbria. To arrive back where he started had taken Mr Garratt the best part of an hour, keeping his doctor friend away from her lifesaving work.

Listening that night to the BBC news, Mr Garratt was interested to hear that Defra was "proposing changes to the way farmers are permitted to move animals round the countryside". But no further detail was forthcoming.

Mr Garratt did briefly wonder whether it might be worth beginning the whole exercise again the next morning. But only very briefly. No doubt if the Great Caravanner could have been told all about this in some French trailer park, she might have cackled her head off at how ingeniously her officials were still managing to give those farmers the runaround, even while she remained on the longest holiday in history.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'



SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Arriva

BUS and train operator Arriva was late joining the privatised railway but quick to prove adept at dragging railways down to bus industry standards. On 6 September it announced half-year profits up 15 percent to £51.6m. Arriva Trains, which has just one small and one medium-sized rail franchise, contributed a £5.5m profit.

Passengers don't need to be master magicians to see how the profit was conjured up. The previous day Arriva Trains Northern proposed cutting 80 trains a day from its schedules because it is employing too few train drivers. That way the missing services won't register as cancellations, for which Arriva can be fined. Arriva says it takes up to a year to train new drivers. It took over the franchise more than 18 months ago.

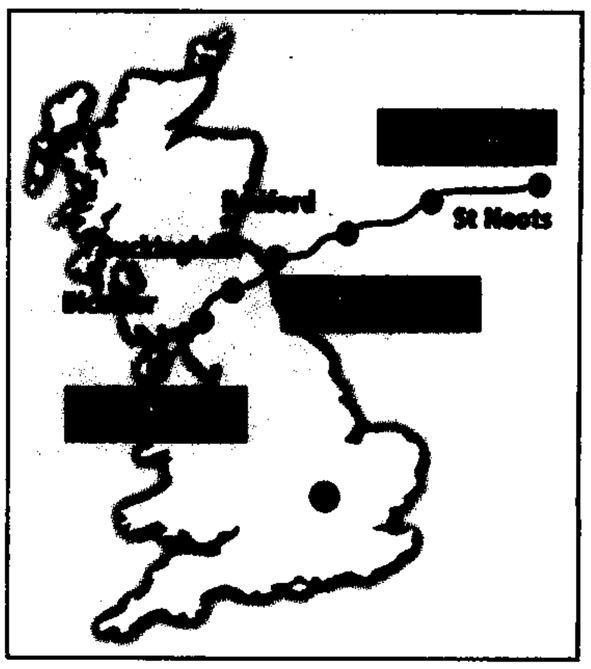
Arriva NT cancelled thousands of services over the summer. Last week buses replaced most trains between Leeds and Knottingley. Although Arriva NT isn't short of rolling stock, it rarely puts extra carriages on the trains that do run. It is of course second nature for a bus operator like Arriva to ensure waiting passengers have little or no information about when a service will turn up, if at all.

The area's passenger transport authority is so fed up it demanded an action plan by last Friday. It wants Arriva stripped of the franchise and has withheld some of its £45m annual subsidy to the company. Those fines could total £10m for this year but that shouldn't worry Arriva NT – promised 36 percent extra subsidy for 2001 by the strategic rail authority (SRA).

Passengers on Arriva Trains Merseyside have also suffered. In May Arriva TM temporarily cut services from four per hour to two after failing to maintain its trains properly. Arriva said the rolling stock was "very old". Scousers sick of Arriva's train service can always catch one of the local buses operated by, er, Arriva.

PS: The SRA has played a part in this cock-up. It originally agreed Arriva would run both franchises until 18 February when new 20-year franchises would take over. It then begged Arriva to keep running the old franchises until 2003. Arriva extracted more subsidy (£263m instead of £199m for 2001) before agreeing. The SRA has regular review meetings with the train operators but failed to avert the present crisis.

● VIRGIN Trains' link up with Stagecoach East is making bus journeys just as shambolic as rail travel. Study the accompanying map – which promotes a cross-country bus service between Oxford and Cambridge stations – and marvel at Virgin's grasp of geography.



● EVEN the government has lost faith in the SRA, which has achieved almost nothing and caused several companies to waste millions of pounds bidding for franchises which may never be awarded. Tony Blair and others are so irritated by the continuing shambles the department of transport has effectively formed a division to do the SRA's job. Only the SRA has the legal power to manage the rail franchises, but ministers now tell it when to jump.

'Dr B. Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

IT'S BOLSOVER NOW

BRITAIN'S ravaged mining communities have proved a rich seam for ex-NUM wideboys who have picked a canny way through the many regeneration schemes thrown at the declining industry.

One such horny-handed opportunist is Duncan MacGregor, former right-hand man to the Beast of Bolsover, Dennis Skinner. MacGregor, a Bolsover district councillor, set up the Cresswell regeneration trust in 1997 with fellow Labour councillor Keith de Banke [*sic*]. Its main project was the refurbishment of the run down Cresswell miners' welfare club, for which it received £117,200 in taxpayers' money from the coalfields *regeneration trust*, plus funds from BT and *Cresswell* parish council.

Parish councillors started asking questions last year when they noticed that not very much work was proceeding and doing so at a snail's pace. Eventually they took MacGregor and de Banke to court and the pair were each ordered to repay £5,000, although MacGregor has yet to do so.

Then it was alleged that MacGregor was submitting simultaneous expenses claims for duties carried out on behalf of both Bolsover council and the trust. MacGregor was so diligent he often managed to be in two different places, miles apart, on the same day. But Bolsover council confirms that he was entitled to his exes. And so, happily, does the secretary of Cresswell regeneration trust. Inspector Knacker has therefore dropped his inquiries. The secretary of Cresswell regeneration trust, by the way, is Cllr Keith de Banke.

ONYX Total Waste Management

Brent

● **MUCH tittering in Brighton as residents recall a profile of Lord "Steve" Bassam in the *Torygraph* last year. Bash'em, currently manoeuvring to become the first directly-elected mayor of Skidrow-on-Sea (*Eyes passim*), claimed that his favourite TV programme is *The Simpsons*. Fans of the show will of course be familiar with Springfield's Mayor Quimby – motto "Corruptus in extremis" – a womanising pot-smoker whose chat-up line is "how would you like a street named after you?" Quimby declares: "I propose that I use what's left of the town treasury to move to a more prosperous town and run for mayor!" How refreshing to learn that Brighton's own would-be mayor has such a sense of humour. Doh!**

A IS FOR ARCHOLE

IN THE Tory party, A is for Archer, Aitken and Ashcroft. A prominent Tory councillor with close links to at least two of the Tories' famous As is Edward Lister, leader of the London borough of Wandsworth.

In *Eye* 887 we revealed that Mr Lister is general manager in south London for the security systems firm, ADT. In 1998 the company was chosen by Wandsworth to install security in 17 schools, including the ADT College. The council leader and ADT general manager scrupulously avoided playing any part in the decision. (The boss of ADT and contributor of some £2m to ADT College is Lord Ashcroft.)

In July 1999 Cllr Lister announced he would be standing as his friend Archole's deputy in the London mayoral campaign. Sadly, it was not to be.

Lately, the normally loquacious Mr Lister has been strangely silent on the subject of his association with the great perjurer. Nor can he or any other local Tory give an accurate account of exactly how much money Archer handed out to refurbish the Tory HQ at Putney, which is in Wandsworth.

HINDE SIGHT

ANOTHER prominent London Tory who was once happy to be associated with Archole is Joe Lobenstein, former mayor of Hackney. In *Eye* 981 we detailed the curious planning system operated by the Stamford Hill neighbourhood committee in which Lobenstein and his pals passed planning applications without declaring their associations with the applicants.

The *Eye*'s story led the council to set up an "investigation" by "director of law and probity" Chris Hinde. Mr Hinde took more than a year to produce his report and hand it to the council's chief executive, Max Caller, who then sat on it for a further nine months. Now the council's new standards committee has at last delivered its verdict. Yes, Lobenstein had failed to declare interests. No, the committee does not recommend that he should be punished in any way.

The toothless watchdog was clearly impressed by Lobenstein's alibi — which he could surely have produced two years ago had he wanted to — that he had asked the borough solicitor whether he should declare an interest regarding one of the applications in question and the borough solicitor had told him he needn't bother. The borough solicitor at the time was, er, Mr Chris Hinde.

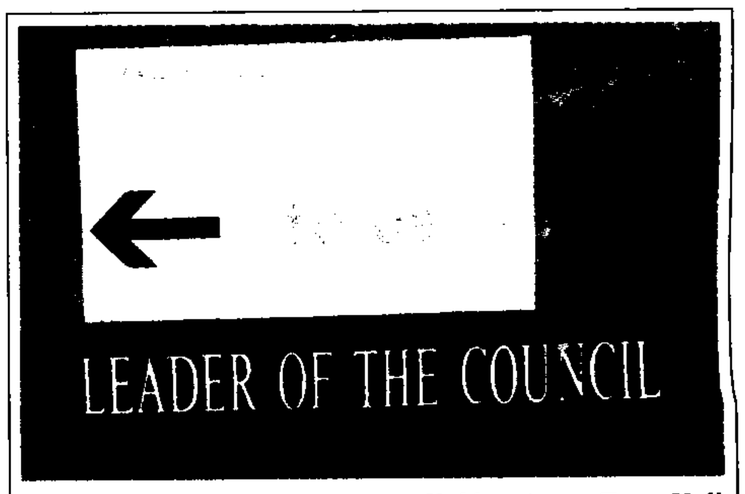
BROWNED OFF

"CITY council complaint against Channel 4 News upheld" announces Durham's *Pravda*-style newsletter, *City News*, triumphantly. The broadcasting standards commission (BSC), it says, found that a news report in June 2000 about the troubles of the Labour council (*Eyes passim*) was "unjust and unfair".

C4 had followed up *Eye* stories about a series of scandals, including a land deal in which the brother-in-law of a senior councillor had bought property from the council for far less than it was worth, the peculiar case of how a £1m film contract had been awarded to a tennis chum of chief executive Colin Shearsmith without being put out to tender, and how the aforementioned councillor, Mildred Brown, was in trouble for calling the city's principal safety officer a "black bastard".

So the *Eye* and Channel 4 were wrong and the council was vindicated? Er, not quite. Durham actually made a total of 27 complaints against the programme. The BSC found nearly all to be worthless, although it did rule that C4 should have given Mr Shearsmith more of a say on the council's view on the value of the land. C4 also neglected to mention that Cllr Brown had declared an interest in the deal and withdrawn from discussions about it.

Where are they now? The crown prosecution service decided there was not enough evidence to prosecute anyone over the land deal; the film has still not been shown but is said to be the most tremendous waste of £1m… and Mildred "bastard" Brown has been kicked out of the Labour party.



Kidderminster Town Hall

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

IN MARCH 1998 former education secretary David Blunkett promised "new" Labour would halt the rampant sale of playing fields which took place under the Tories by passing legislation which required local authorities to seek permission from the secretary of state before flogging off sports fields.

"It is with great pleasure that, tonight, we can join together to say that enough is enough, and today is the day when we agree to put a stop to this environmental vandalism," boasted Blunkett. Since when the government has approved 160 out of 166 applications to sell off playing fields.

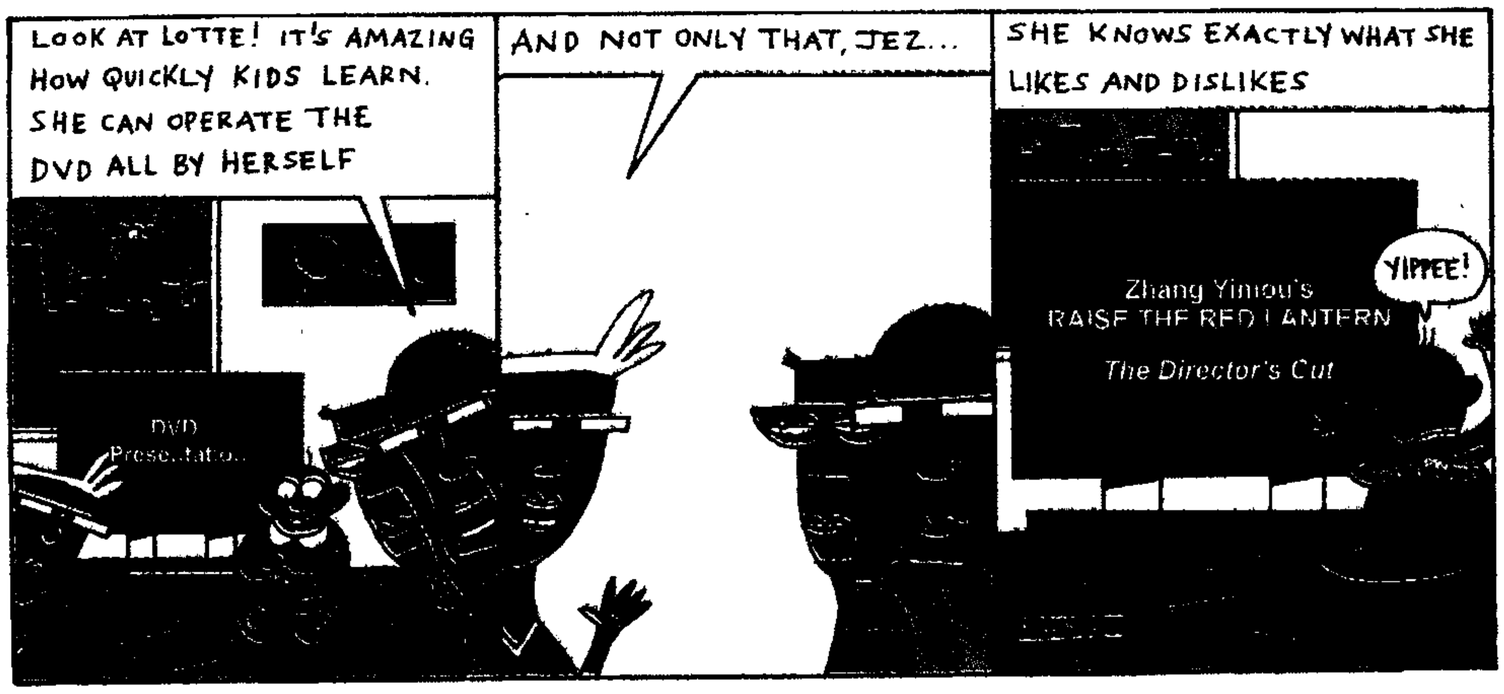
Further education colleges, however, do not even have to seek government permission to sell off playing fields, after gaining autonomy from local authorities in 1993. Varndean College in Brighton is one such example. At the end of July it applied to Brighton and Hove city council for planning permission to sell three acres of land incorporating playing fields on the edge of the beautiful Sussex Downs to be turned into housing.

Varndean has played down the use of the land as playing fields, claiming the area was only home to one hockey pitch, and insisting that the sale is necessary to fund part of a new building programme costing £4-6m, which it says is necessary to cope with a forthcoming population boom of 16 to 19 year olds in the city. But the council has said: "There are policies covering the dispersal of playing fields in both the Brighton Borough Local Plan and the Brighton and Hove Local Plan. The policies seek to safeguard existing sports pitches and open spaces and will be applied when determining this application."

Residents and campaigners go much further. They say the land has been used by schoolchildren for generations. As well as the college, there are five schools on the Varndean campus whose pupils have until now enjoyed the greenery. The timing of the Varndean planning application, registered on 24 July with a deadline for consultation of 29 August — bang in the middle of the school summer holidays — has further angered objectors.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


LOOK AT LOTTE! IT'S AMAZING HOW QUICKLY KIDS LEARN. SHE CAN OPERATE THE DVD ALL BY HERSELF
AND NOT ONLY THAT, JEZ...
SHE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT SHE LIKES AND DISLIKES
DVD Prese..tatio..
Zhang Yimou's RAISE THE RED LANTERN
The Director's Cut
YIPPEE!

NOOKS and CORNERS

IN DEFENDING the "controversial" plans of the John Muir Birthplace Trust for the house in Dunbar where the great pioneer of conservation was born in 1838, Norman Hampshire, chairman of the trust, explained: "We wanted people to open the front door and say 'Wow! This is not what we expected'." If the trust has its way, visitors may not only say "Wow!" but several other expletives as well.

Normally visitors tend to expect boringly conventional things like floors and walls and doors behind the entrance of an old house. But in Dunbar they will have the thrill of discovering a gutted three-storey high space containing a free-standing tower designed by Richard Murphy filled with plasma screens and other state-of-the-art aids to historical interpretation.

A detail from the painting "John Muir in Kings Canyon National Park" by Colleen Mitchell Veyna

I exposed this pretentious proposal in *Eye* 1032. Since then the Save John Muir House Campaign has fought back magnificently and elicited letters of protest from distinguished academics and conservationists in the United States — where Muir spent most of his life and is much more highly regarded than in his native land. This has made little impression on those who are seeking glory by mutilating an innocent Georgian house which, they claim, is not really authentic as many of the original floor joists have been replaced.

The same argument could be used of course to demolish Westminster Abbey or any other historic building which has had stonework or timber replaced as a matter of routine maintenance or in the course of a major old-fashioned restoration. Visitors, quite reasonably, surely expect visual and tactile reality rather than High-Tec virtual reality — why bother to travel to Dunbar at all if what the birthplace tells you about the great John Muir can be seen on a screen back home?

East Lothian council has received more than 200 letters objecting to the trust's plans — a record — but its planning officers still recommend approval. Of course they do: the trust's chairman, Mr Hampshire, is the East Lothian councillor for Dunbar; another trustee, Margaret O'Connor, is East Lothian's arts officer; while East Lothian's architect, Liz Maclean, has been instrumental in promoting the scheme.

As the *Eye* went to press, the planning committee meeting on 18 September was expected to be a mere formality for these important people to grant themselves planning permission to celebrate a great conservationist by a posturing act of destruction. Posters published by opponents have been banned from public libraries and any council-controlled noticeboard by Jim Lamond, head of policy and performance.

What a curious place Dunbar must be. Those who have seen the seaside town from the main railway line to Edinburgh will know that the main landmark is the Bellvue Hotel, a magnificent Edwardian baronial pile gutted by fire more than a decade ago and now slowly disintegrating. Would not the energies of East Lothian's planning officers, let alone £300,000 of public money, be better directed towards restoring it – especially as the floors are already removed?

Despite the international standing of John Muir, the Scottish executive has so far declined to intervene in what it describes as a "local matter". The only hope is that Historic Scotland may agree with the Scottish Civic Trust, the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland and other informed opponents of gratuitous vandalism and call the case in.

MEANWHILE the puerile debate being conducted north of the border (as south) between advocates of "modern" architecture and those who defend a dwindling stock of old and/or beautiful buildings as essential to national identity and culture is well illustrated by the cultural and financial disaster of the Scottish parliament building project at Holyrood [Eyes passim ad nauseam]. But worse may be coming.

In its enthusiasm for stoking a "Bonfire of the Quangoes", Scottish ministers are now proposing the abolition of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland. This will require the repeal of part of the 1953 historic buildings and ancient monuments act which established this expert advisory body. The only reason given is dubious: that when the HBCS was established "the range of expertise it provides was not available to Scottish ministers from their own officials. That is no longer the case, particularly through the advice available from Historic Scotland."

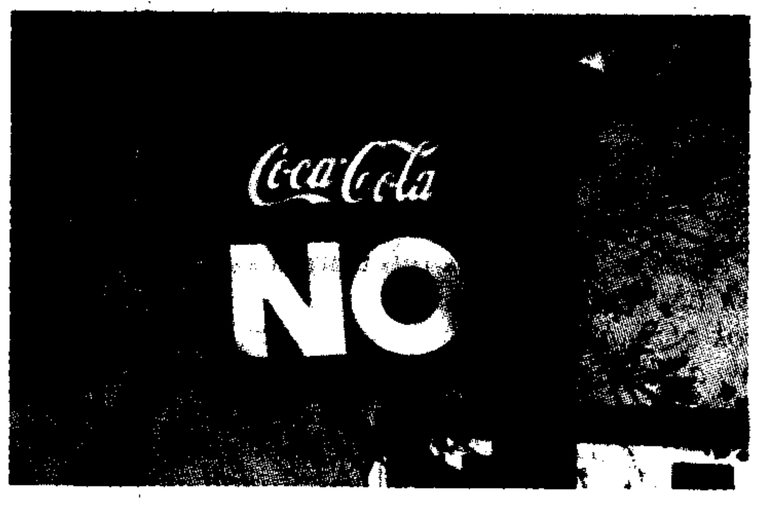
This may or may not be true, but even salaried civil servants can make mistakes. The point is that the HBCS provides free (the members are unpaid) advice which helps make Historic Scotland more accountable and less introverted and remote. Does this proposal reflect Labour's thinking towards historic buildings and the environment? If so, what is the future of the various advisory committees which similarly, over the last half-century, help guide what is now English Heritage and make it more impressive as well as accountable?

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

Now, that's what I call graffiti!
Vibrant, dynamic, expressionistic–very Basquiat!
There's another one, look!
What are we waiting for? Cover it up!
Vandals!
PONCEY ARTISTS OUT OF HOXTON

I-SPY *Adelaide, S. Australia*



Submitted by Michael Wichbold. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

NICHOLAS Kenyon's decision to jettison the traditional, flag-waving jollity at this year's Last Night of the Proms was widely welcomed as a sensitive response to all that had happened earlier in the week. But it wasn't the best possible news for the artists who learned at the eleventh hour that their services were no longer required (the family of pianist Paul Lewis, scheduled to play in a particularly jolly piece by Constant Lambert, were so upset they sent back their tickets to the box office).

And it was bad news too for those determined flag-wavers who so cherish the whole business they queue overnight for the privilege of taking part. However, insiders at the BBC believe Kenyon is using the World Trade Centre deaths as an opportunity to change the Last Night for good, establishing a precedent that will keep the *Land of Hope and Glory* items off the bill in future.

Past efforts to rid the Last Night of its jingoism have always been quashed by BBC administrators afraid of the mass protests, jammed switchboards and empty seats that would result. In 1990 the director of the Proms, John Drummond, peremptorily cancelled Mark Elder's contract to conduct the Last Night after Elder told a newspaper that perhaps the growing prospect of a Gulf War made robust performances of *Rule Britannia* inappropriate. Years later he was still badmouthing Elder over the matter, dismissing the conductor in print as "a curious case of obstinacy and indecision". His successor clearly takes a different view.

If there was one piece, though, that *had* to go from this year's advertised programme it was John Adams's *A Short Ride in a Fast Machine* which has fared ill in the Proms before. On a previous occasion it was scheduled for performance, and swiftly dropped, just after the death of the Princess of Wales.

The unthinkability of playing such a piece at such a moment has in fact inspired a competition among Radio 3 staff – noted for their gallows humour – to devise an alternative Last Night programme in the worst possible taste. Front-running entries so far include Charles Ives's *Central Park in the Dark*, Aaron Copland's *Quiet City*, and Vaughan Williams's *A Vision of Aeroplanes*.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Advertisement, Phoenix, Arizona

Letters

Shame on us...

Sir,

I was going to write this a week ago, and now wish I had. Your blatantly prejudiced feature The Book of Sharon, and previous similar, has long been a blot on your mission to attack hypocrisy on all sides equally.

This week we have seen the consequences of, obliquely, such hypocrisy by you. I shall support what Private Eye ought to be for ever, but for the first time ever, I hope you're ashamed.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL OAKLEY,

Sutton Coldfield, W. Midlands.

...or US?

Sir,

It will be interesting to see the reaction of the supporters of Noraid and Sinn Fein in America now that terrorism has landed on their doorstep. Maybe they will now think twice before donating so readily to the so-called good cause.

Yours faithfully,
SIMON D. POWLEY,

Via e-mail.

East is east?

Sir,

I am at a loss to understand why revelations of Iain Duncan Smith's Japanese heritage should inspire a spoof of The King And I (Eye 1036, p20), a story which is famously set in Thailand (or Siam in old money). Surely it couldn't be that you believe all those slanty-eyed oriental fellows to be the same, could it?

Yours,
M.J. SIMPSON,

Leicester.

Grayling railing

Sir,

It's always fun to see professional cage-rattlers banging at their own bars. Full marks then to A.C. Grayling (Literary Review, Eye 1035) for daring to despise Christianity, despite the stern obligations that unarguably come with being white, English(ish) and educated. What a revealing review that was.

What is it with the Eye and intellectuals? In a country that puts so much effort into avoiding and belittling sustained thinking in favour of "pragmatism", taking the piss makes easy money and looks like cleverness, and anyone speaking plain English while affecting to be a "philosopher" clearly deserves all he gets. Look at Pseuds' Corner, in which statements beyond the blankly utilitarian and displays of illiterate egotism alike are deemed worthy of ridicule. Academics in particular are damned if they do speak to the non-specialist public (such as developing a "career in the upmarket media") and damned if they don't (writing papers for peer conferences, pillaged out of context for PC). I don't recall Kingsley Amis being excoriated for writing poetry crits for the Daily Express. True media tarts like Raj Persaud might deserve it, but joined-up thinking on a topic not involving minor celebrities or political agenda manipulation, is not exactly pop psychology flung at all and sundry.

Get back to reviewing Jeffrey Archer and leave the deep stuff to people who read without moving their lips. The great philistine playpen, like all lazy conservative causes, relies after all on a continuing supply of the people who can still articulate things like conscience, choice and reason. If we can do without it, let the ground be cleared for better things: what's worth having will grow back regardless. I look forward to seeing Grayling's "Last Word" on Anonymity too: it's bound to plant a marker far higher up the beach than your wailing wet Cnut can manage.

TONY CLARKE,

Ely, Cambs.

Electric shock

Sir,

In the full cognisance of extending an already overworked joke, the correction in "Stunning explanation" (Eye 1036) to the correction in "Watt's Funny" (Eye 1035) of the physics in the wording of the cartoon in Eye 1034 could have been amusing had it not been for the errors contained therein.

Capacity is a measure of volume described in cubic metres and is not to be confused with electrical capacitance which is measured in farads (please note that SI units when derived from a name take the lower case initial letter when using the full unit and an upper case initial letter for the abbreviated form – farad, F).

Thus the corrected informative answer to the thug's question, "What's the charge?", should have been "50,000 volts multiplied by my capacitance as a police officer".

Yours,
DAVID J HUNTER,

Burscough, Lancashire.

Lookalike

Rimington

Robinson

Sir,

My spies inform me that Anne Robinson has been leading a secret double life as the head of MI5.

Whose intelligence is sadly lacking? Whose licence to kill has a few too many points on it? Stella Rimington, you ARE the weakest agent – goodbye.

Yours,
PETER J. BLEACKLEY,

Littlehampton, Sussex.

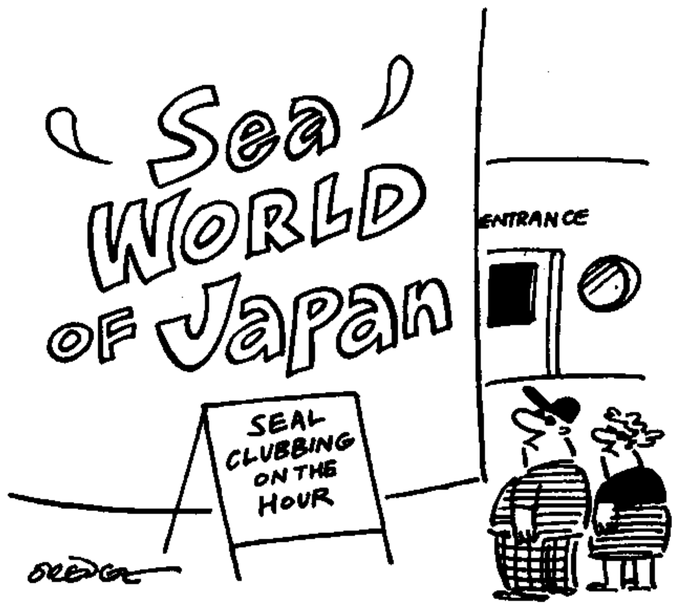
Faqey-ing it?

Sir,

Re: "Refugee" Mohamed Faqey, 1036. If you feared for your life in your home, wouldn't you go nextdoor for refuge? Mr Faqey would have been quite safe nextdoor in Cyprus, safe in Greece, safe in Malta, safe in Italy, safe in Switzerland, safe in France. The man was pretty choosy when he was looking for a comfortable bed for the night, wasn't he?

CHARLES SOLOMAN,

Upper Poppleton, York.



LUVVIES

Nature inspires me. The God in everyone, the God in me, the God I see in other people. When you're in a certain space and you have the ability to open up and you're allowed to see someone else's beauty. You can be filled with inspiration from that, from friendships. It's very profound. That's a gift. I've been very inspired by all those things. I'm inspired by them every day.

LISA MARIE
(actress, Planet of the Apes)
Guardian

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Student moans

Sir,

Your article ("Adelphi: taking over the asylum", Eye 1036) notes that a private landlord switching his business from housing students to housing asylum seekers has "brought some of his properties up to the standards required".

It is interesting to note that the home office requires certain standards for asylum seekers (whom the government normally seems to treat as badly as possible) which the department for education does not seem to feel are necessary for students, who of course have to survive on loans and are ineligible for housing benefit or income support.

I thought it impossible for "new" Labour to hate anyone more than those fleeing persecution in other countries. Can I (as a student) apply for asylum in Zimbabwe?

MATTHEW ASHBY,

Leicester.

Sir,

Although the problems of students falling deeply into debt are worthy of serious satirical attention, I'm afraid to report that the situation depicted in your cartoon on page 17 of Eye 1035, of a worried pensioner saving to pay off her bills and her student loan, could not actually happen. You see, student loans are automatically written off if you reach the age of 60 before you finish paying for them.

Yours,
LUDOVIC TOLHURST-CLEAVER,
(multiple student loanee),

Altrincham, Cheshire.

Page turner

Sir,

Bookworm's theory that Salman Rushdie has been watching Kronenbourg adverts for inspiration (Eye 1036) is a slur on a highly literate fellow. He's far more likely to have been inspired to create his "woman so beautiful she causes car crashes" character by Richard Brautigan's novel The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966, published in 1973, which features a heroine called Vida with just such a capacity.

Yours,
CHARLIE BARNETT,

Via email.

Head turner

Sir,

Books and Bookmen (Eye 1036) linked recent literary female characters to the girl so beautiful she causes traffic accidents in the Kronenberg (sic) beer advert. And there was I thinking that the men in the advert were distracted by the pint of beer. The client ought to demand some money back.

Yours,
DERRICK NORTON,

Via e-mail.

Speeding bullets

Sir,

Richard Hook rightly observes that driver and ***pedestrian*** *error is likely to be the main precipitating factor leading to an injury road accident (sic)... this prepares you to die, then excess speed finishes you off.*

Re the analogy of "it is not the gun that kills it is the person that pulls the trigger": I would rather be shot with a spudgun than a high velocity rifle.

The greater the differential speed between you and what you interact with, the more likely you are to be killed or involved in an accident.

JOHN C BULLAS,
Road Safety Researcher.

Sir,

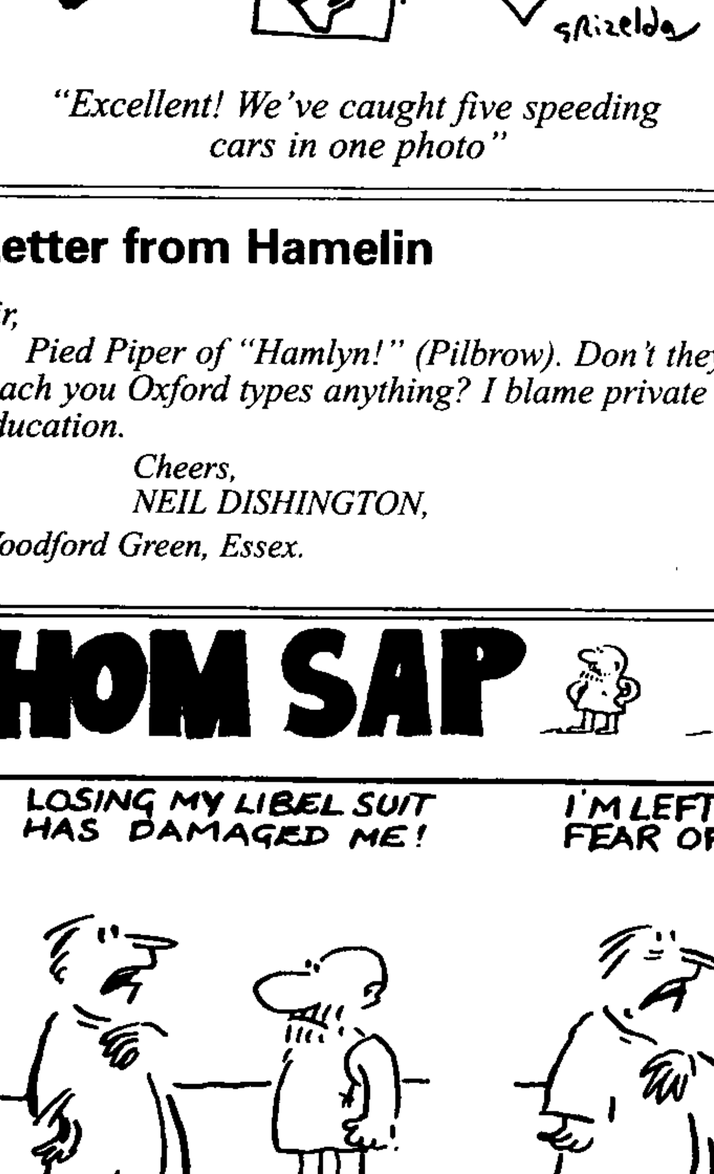
If, as Mr Hook says in his letter (1036), excessive speed is a factor in less than 10 percent of accidents, then adherence to the law would save only some 300 lives a year. Not much of a reason to drive legally, is it?

Yours,
COLIN ATTENBOROUGH,
Ely.

Sir,

Re: Richard T. Hook's statement "Speed does not kill". How many of the 1,230,000 or so people killed by cars in 1999 were victims of stationary vehicles? Perhaps vaccination might be the solution?

Yours,
STEVE KIDD,
Pontefract.



"Excellent! We've caught five speeding cars in one photo"

Letter from Hamelin

Sir,

Pied Piper of "Hamlyn!" (Pilbrow). Don't they teach you Oxford types anything? I blame private education.

Cheers,
NEIL DISHINGTON,
Woodford Green, Essex.

Brighton peer

Sir,

Your punningly awful attack on Lord Bassam really plumbed the depths of vacuity and spurious conspiracy. Funding sources for the Yes campaign are no more surprising or suspicious than those for the No campaign (eg local UNISON.)

No doubt we shall read more in your organ, just as we in London-Super-Mare go to the polls (or, rather, postbox) in the October postal mayoral referendum to vote resoundingly Yes for real democracy and Yes to the future of our city.

Yours,
ROY PENNINGTON,
Campaign For Real Democracy.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Iain Duncan Smith will stand shoulder to shoulder behind Tony Blair at the present time."
Channel 4 News
(Marion Offenbach)

"Andy Warhol's silk-screen paintings are literally the tip of the iceberg."
Radio 4
(Ian Gillies)

"Michael Owen isn't the tallest of lads, but his height more than makes up for that."
MARK LAWRENSON, BBC1
(J. Jeffries)

"England won 5-0 with Arsenal's Francis Jeffers scoring the winning goal."
Channel 5 News
(Alex Eichhorn)

"Gomes had scored four goals for Portugal against Andorra, including a hat-trick."
BILL O'HERLIHY, RTE
(Eamonn Torsney)

Swindon wilts

Sir,

I was sorry to see the rehash of an inaccurate Sunday Telegraph story in Piloti's usually informative column (Private Eye, 7 September).

The National Trust is indeed looking for a new out-of-London location to bring together staff from four separate offices into two. The trust has long believed it would make sense to bring together our central staff, and as a result we are searching in the Wiltshire area, where we already have three offices, for the best location. No decision has yet been made about where this will be, but Piloti will be pleased to hear that public transport links are a high priority and that we will be retaining a London headquarters for staff who need to be in London either permanently or for meetings.

I am wholly mystified by Piloti's claim that I am unsympathetic to historic buildings and that no more money is to be spent on them. Neither claim could be further from the truth – the bulk of the trust's budget is being spent, with my wholehearted support, on the care, maintenance and management of our marvellous historic houses, gardens and collections.

Finally, the suggestion that I am now or have ever worked in No 10 is entirely fictional. My 30 months as a cabinet office official hardly merit Piloti's "babe" label.

Yours faithfully,
FIONA REYNOLDS,
Director-General, The National Trust.

Sir,

With reference to Nooks and Corners, Eye 1036.

Once again Piloti assumes that the whole population is to be found in and around London. This is annoying enough, but to be told that the NMR move to Swindon made it inaccessible is ludicrous. It may now be "a long and expensive train journey from Paddington", but it is convenient for those living in Reading, Bristol, Bath and Swindon. (And that's just by rail. It is only a short drive from the M4.) While the NMR was at London it was a long and expensive train journey from the West Country, North East, North West and Midlands.

Also, the organisation in question is called English Heritage, implying the heritage of the whole country, not just London.

Yours faithfully,
JACOBY P. HAWYARD (Mrs),
Stoke-on-Trent.

PS: I have lived in Basingstoke, Lampeter and now Stoke-on-Trent. I don't care where national collections are – if I want to see them, I go to them.

Victor vanquished

Sir,

One of the aspects of Private Eye that I greatly appreciate is the ability of your staff to separate propaganda from reality. However, it seems Mr Lewis-Smith requires a refresher course, as he has been caught disseminating test data from the Evil Atheist Press (EAP) urban legend creation unit (Funny Old World, 1036). This reduces both your credibility and our non-existence.

ROY THEARLE,
Via e-mail.

HOM SAP AUSTIN

"The other possibility is that it is someone intending to case people's homes with a view to burgling them.
"A uniformed Fire Service employee, with identification, can provide this service free of charge upon request."

Manchester Metro News

Letter from **Istanbul**
from Our Own Correspondent

BULENT ECEVIT, our prime minister, was clearly in a reflective mood last month when he marked the anniversary of the 1999 earthquake. This devastating blow had hit some of our most densely populated areas, killing around 30,000 people and injuring hundreds of thousands more. The tremors also made many homeless, leaving them living in massive tent cities.

Back then, the Turkish state had been "quick to act", Ecevit recalled on the day of the commemoration. It must have been a fear of the tragedy's survivors being too effusive in their gratitude that made him decide to speak in Ankara, well away from the quake zone itself.

A similar modesty, we surmise, also prevented other leaders in our three-party coalition from venturing forth to the former scene of devastation. For there must surely have been some mistake in a recent opinion poll that gave our leader's party an approval rating of, er, just 2.1 percent, with his partners riding high on 4 percent.

Ecevit reminded us that prefabricated huts had been provided "within a short time" to house the survivors as winter came on. So it would be churlish to recall the government's initial pledge to provide everyone housing within three months of the quake – a promise extended indefinitely when it became clear that as the snow fell, vast numbers of survivors were still under canvas.

Nonetheless the move from prefabricated huts to permanent housing was also "about to be completed", Ecevit said. For this, we expect, we should thank the sterling work of the housing minister, Koray Aydin, a member of the far-right National Action Party and the second largest grouping in the coalition. He is building some 25,000 homes for earthquake survivors with public money – much of it donated by patriotic citizens and foreign aid agencies.

Building the new homes was put out to tender in a process that Ecevit described on the commemoration day as "fully fair and transparent". Strange, then, that only five days later, investigators from the Ankara state security court should have held their own commemoration by staging a dawn raid on the housing ministry, carting off box loads of papers relating to the earthquake housing tenders.

There have been scurrilous accusations about the housing minister's even-handedness before. Malcontents, for example, saw more than a coincidence in the almost exclusive allocation of housing ministry financial aid after the quake to municipalities run by the National Action Party – including one 300 miles from the affected area! But we remain confident that the truth will come out, even if, in our democracy, the wheels of justice do seem to run a little slowly. There must be a good reason an interior ministry probe that uncovered widespread corruption at the energy ministry has so far resulted only in the departure of the man who ordered the inquiry.

This failure to bring off a successful prosecution must be familiar to our earthquake survivors. After two years, not one single contractor has been brought to book for the shoddy housing that so easily collapsed back in August 1999. At the time, we recall, there were promises by officials to bring to justice "all those who have transgressed". Meanwhile, in the earthquake zone, despite a new law forbidding new houses above four storeys, a quick tour shows there are dozens of such buildings now under construction – again with the same shoddy materials.

Ecevit, however, said citizens in the quake zone were now "better off than before". At least they are now no longer living in tents – supplied by the Turkish Red Crescent and last used by our troops in the Korean War half a century ago. The benefits of such a cost-conscious option didn't square easily with records of the massive budget the Red Crescent was then consuming, and the organisation's directors were charged with major fraud and embezzlement. Two years on, and to amazement all round, we have to report that there is yet to be a successful prosecution...

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"It is a conversation piece. As soon as you tell people what it is, they immediately want to smell it," Thusita Ranasinghe told customers at the Maximus factory store in Colombo, Sri Lanka. "Already, upscale restaurants and hotels are presenting their menus on our paper, and people are fascinated to learn that such an exotic material is made entirely from recycled elephant dung."

Ranasinghe, a Maximus director, was explaining the many advantages of his company's latest product. "We guarantee that every sheet of paper is sun-dried, sanitised, disinfected, and deodorised, but it's a very natural product, and with a little knowledge it is still possible to tell what the elephant had for dinner. This dark sheet comes from an elephant which had eaten a meal of branches, while this lighter paper came from a jumbo who had been snacking on coconuts. You can even tell the age of the animal, because young pachyderms chew their food better, and produce finer fibres in their dung. This sheet has thick fibres, suggesting that the dung came from an older elephant who couldn't chew his food very well.

"Our paper is environmentally friendly too. Each ton of paper made with elephant dung can save up to twenty trees. Our products are already used by the Hilton Hotel, HSBC Bank, Citi Bank, the Bank of Ceylon, and Sri Lankan Airlines, and there's a painter in Vienna who is planning an exhibition of his work done entirely on dung paper. Ten kilos of dung produce 600 sheets of A4 paper, which retails at $1.50. We also make paper from bananas, cinnamon bark, and rice husks, but elephant dung is definitely our number one best seller." *(Agence France-Presse, 1/701. Spotter: Anon)*

— o —

"Female drug users are not just skinny hags," Jasperine Schupp told reporters at a magazine launch in Amsterdam, "but most women's glossies don't cater for their special needs. They want something that reflects their special interests, and that's why I'm proud to announce the launch of the first glossy magazine aimed specifically at addicts, Mainline Lady."

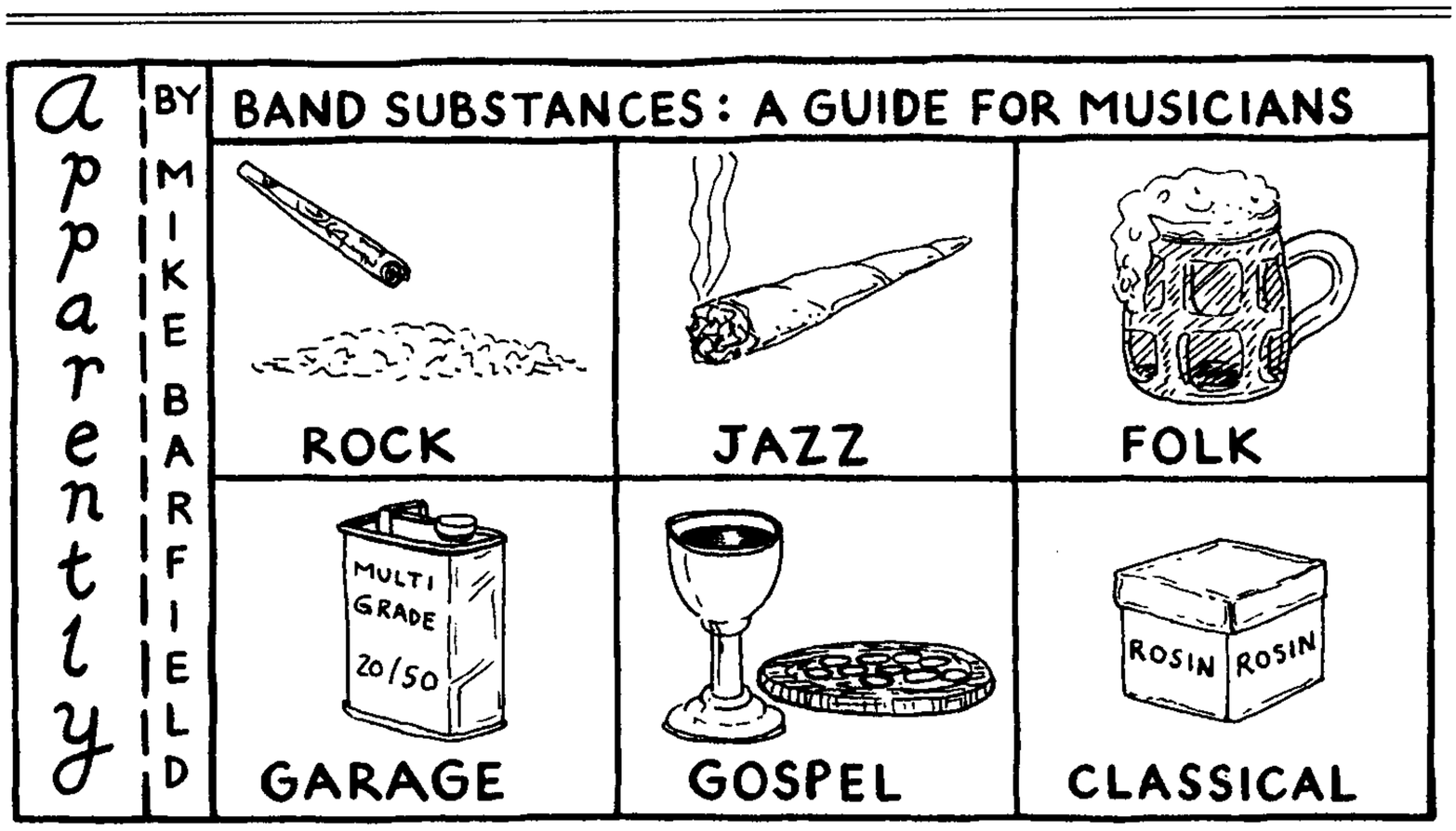
Schupp, editor-in-chief of the new publication, then explained what readers could expect to find in her pages. "Mainline Lady has secured funding from the Dutch health ministry, and is aiming to build a circulation of 5,000. We have all the usual features, but with our own distinctive slant to them. The 'Dear Doctor' column deals with HIV hazards for syringe users, a heroin addict gets a hair and face makeover, and there are tips on how to put on weight. There's advice for 'working girls' too, explaining the health and environmental benefits of sharpening your syringes regularly, of not sharing them with your clients, and of having a weekly condom washday. And we even have horoscopes. This month, Cancer says 'your dope will taste better than usual,' while Capricorn promises 'you will be lucky in love, so make sure you have enough condoms.' And Librans are assured that 'for once, your doctor will understand what your problem is, instead of just prescribing methadone again.'" *(Bangkok Post, 25/7/01. Spotter: Adrian Warner)*

— o —

"Our officials raided the foodstall after receiving complaints from members of the public," a Malaysian Health Office spokesman told reporters in Muar. "They said they had seen the owner in the marketplace, boiling food and used underwear

together in the same pot on his stall, then selling platefuls to passers-by. And they were right to complain because, when we tried to question him, he suddenly dipped his hand into the pot, and pulled out a pair of ladies' underwear. Then, before we could stop him, he threw them into the Muar river, where they were swiftly carried away by the current.

"Lacking evidence, we could not prosecute this man, but let me make one thing clear. There is a traditional belief among street traders that putting dirty ladies' underwear into the cooking pot will increase the demand for food, by attracting customers back for more. But I tell you plainly, this is an untrue belief, and must be stamped out. All street hawkers involved in the food and beverage business have to concentrate on hygiene, quality, and prices. There is no more room for used ladies' underwear in Malaysian cooking." (Harian Metro, 3/7/01. Spotter: Anon)



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And a very serious 'hullo' it is to you all this week, as some of you might have guessed who saw me at the working men's club last week, looking, I don't mind admitting it, fairly shaken.

Obviously there is only one subject that it would be appropriate for me to write about this week. One subject that shocked all of us to the core.

When something like this happens, out of the blue, we are bound to ask the very deepest questions, which go to the very foundations of our faith.

How can man behave so badly towards his fellow man?

And how does God allow it?

These are questions we must all have been asking in recent days, and I'm not going to pretend that I've got all the answers.

But all I can say is that if Mr Paddy Ashdown things he can get away with calling me a "smarmy git", then he's got another think coming.

I don't want to sound vindictive, but I can only say that this is one of the most outrageous and unprovoked attacks ever launched on a vicar in the long history of the church.

The Rev. Ashdown, of the United Reformed Liberal Democratic Church, has got an amazing nerve, calling a fellow church leader a "smarmy git".

I am not going to descend to his childish level of schoolboy boy abuse. Nothing whatever would be gained by coming up with similar insulting names for Mr Ashdown, such as "Paddy Pantsdown", which is what I believe his congregation used to call him.

And how, we might ask, did a man of the cloth, who lays claim to moral superiority and the right to tell other people how to live their lives, come to earn this particular nickname?

It is not my place, particularly in a parish newsletter intended for family reading, to go into the sordid details of his affair with his secretary.

Suffice it to say that the Rev. Ashdown's conduct in this matter was utterly reprehensible. If he is going to go around "casting the first stone" by calling me a "smarmy git" (whatever that is supposed to mean!), I should warn him that I have a pretty good supply of stones myself, just like the ones which in biblical times they used to throw at people who were caught in adultery.

No, I'm not going to do that. Nor will I seek to answer Mr Ashdown's ridiculous allegation that I promised to merge our two churches and make him my deputy.

Such a proposal would be highly unethical, and I would never have to put forward such a stupid idea in the first place.

Clearly retirement has not been kind to Mr Ashdown, and he should take medical advice about the problems of senile dementia, memory loss and calling me a "smarmy git".

At a time when the entire world is in a state of shock, it is pathetic that he can think of nothing better to write about.

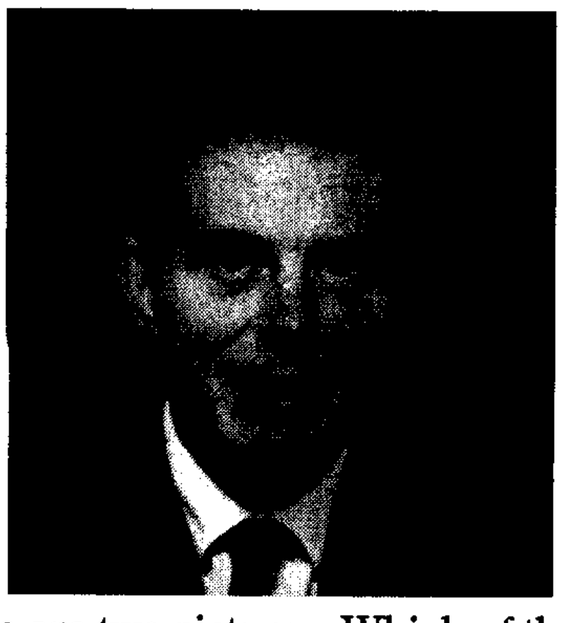
Yours, Tony

The Editor Writes

■ In the interests of my being able to work more closely with the Vicar, I would like to inform parishioners that I am moving into the house nextdoor to the vicarage. This will enable the Vicar to have direct access to me at all times, on a round-the-clock basis, which should greatly improve his performance and stop him coming across as "a smarmy git" (not that he does!!).

A. Campbell, Editor

PARISH COMPETITION
Set by the Vicar



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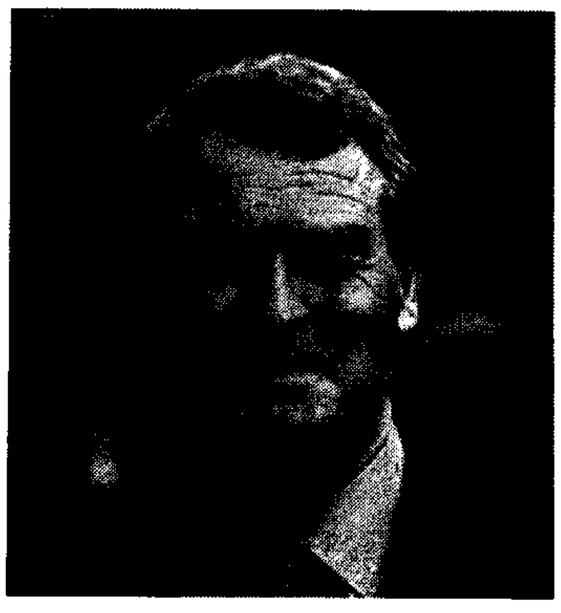


B

Here are two pictures. Which of them do you think shows "a smarmy git"?

Clue: The answer is B.

First winner receives a bottle of champagne.

(No *sour grapes* here Paddy!!) T.B.

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

NO. 94
LORD HURD OF WESTWELL

Lord Hurd, are you at home in the world of spoons?

I hope I am. I have been lucky enough to play a leading role in most fields of human endeavour, though with what degree of success, I will have to leave to others to decide...

...but you were never Prime Minister, were you?

I thought we'd agreed that this was going to be about spoons, with a plug for my new book at the end.

As Foreign Secretary, you must have come across a wide variety of spoons from different parts of the world?

Indeed. I remember how, when I was visiting the Kremlin, Mr Gorbachev personally presented me with one of those delightful lacquered Russian spoons. I still keep it on my desk to this day.

So that would be your favourite spoon?

One of many, actually. Mr Milosevic once gave me a very attractive silver spoon, which once belonged to a famous Bosnian monastery. It inspired me with the title for my new book, *The Milosevic Spoon*.

I thought we'd agreed that you'd get a plug at the end, not in the middle?

When I retired as a non-executive director, they gave me a very fine set of 22 non-executive soup spoons, inscribed with the familiar NatWest logo. We occasionally use them for dinner parties.

You're obviously something of a spoon-o-phile, Lord Hurd.

Well, it's not surprising. I was brought up in the countryside, in a house full of spoons. Then at school, at Eton, everyone had a spoon of their own, so it was just something one took for granted. Traditions are important, aren't they?

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

My new novel is called *The Spoons of Navarone* and is published by... *(That's enough Hurd. Ed.)*

NEXT WEEK: Iain Duncan Donuts

WORLD WAR THREE

What You Didn't Miss

Day One (on all channels)

Presenter *(putting on serious face)*: It's obviously much too early to speculate, but we have in the studio several experts who are going to try to help us to get some idea of this almost unimaginable tragedy, which is already being described as the worst thing that has happened in the world since the death of Princess Diana.

Professor Ivan Beard, you run the Terrorist Studies Department at the University of Inverneasden. Who do you think is responsible for this appalling tragedy that is already being spoken of as the worst thing that has happened to the world since Hiroshima?

Beard: Well, it's obviously too early to speculate. But I think we have to look at all the various groups who might be capable of doing something like this. And I'm sure that's what the various intelligence agencies will be doing over the next few days and weeks, as they attempt to piece together the various pieces of this incredibly complex jigsaw.

Presenter: Can we just see the footage again of the plane going into that tower?

(Film runs in slow motion for 42nd time in previous hour)

Presenter: And obviously as we are watching that our thoughts go to all the families and loved ones of the victims, and we shall be interviewing some of them later as they try to come to terms with this almost unimaginable tragedy which is already being compared to... er... General Sir Michael Bore, could I bring you in here on the military aspects of this story. Obviously the United States will have to retaliate in some way. What form do you think that will take?

Bore: Well, it's obviously too early to speculate, but I think it's important, before launching any strike, to have some clear idea of just who you're going to attack. It's no good just firing off a load of cruise missiles unless you have some idea of the target. That's one thing we learned in Kosovo, and I'm sure my friend Colin Powell will be very well aware of that.

Presenter: Can we have the footage of that first tower collapsing again, please?

(Film runs in slow motion for 86th time in previous hour)

Presenter: Joe Talbott, you're the London bureau chief for Newstalk magazine. You know New York well. What do you think will be the feeling in New York as people come to terms with this horrifying tragedy?

Talbott: Well, it's still too early to speculate, but I would suggest that the predominant feelings of most ordinary New Yorkers as of this time would be a combination of shock, disbelief, and sheer disbelieving shock. This is a city, you have to remember, which did not go through the Blitz, like you people in London. I was talking just now to a friend in Manhattan, who told me that there is an uncanny feeling just now of shocked disbelief.

Presenter: Do we have any clear idea yet of the likely number of casualties?

Talbott: Well, the latest word from Mayor Giuliani is that it's too early speculate.

Presenter: Yes, of course, but all the evidence suggests that we're looking at hundreds of thousands. Who do you think we should blame for this? Is it Osram Bin Liner, the world's most evil man? Professor?

Beard: Well, Bin Liner must obviously be a prime suspect. But the question is, does he have the capability? In my own view, he does, but I would have to qualify that by saying that I really don't know. But one thing that I think we can say is certain is that it is something the intelligence agencies will be looking at very carefully indeed over the next hours and days, as they struggle to come to terms with what is being spoken of as the worst thing that has ever happened in the history of the world.

Presenter: Thank you, professor. And now, can we have some more footage of people jumping out of windows?

(cont. on all channels)

Extremists Seen Dancing And Cheering In Guardian

by Our Media Staff **Roy Greenslime**

FANATICAL anti-American supporters of the sinister leader Al-Rubbisha were seen openly celebrating in the offices of the Guardian newspaper at the news that the World Trade Centre had been attacked.

Rubbisha was quick to deny the charge, saying "Only a small proportion of my columnists, ie 80%, were involved in the singing and dancing. The rest showed their respect by having a 3-minute sing-song of 'America The Bastards'."

BURIED UNDER RUBBISH

by Our Entire Staff **Phil Supplement**

THERE was thought to be little hope of any informed coverage emerging from the thousands of tons of newsprint which left readers buried in voyeuristic cliché and bellicose sentimentality last week.

"There but for the grace of God go I," admitted one reporter, who added, "America tonight is a nation united in prayer, but also in a desire for vengeance in an atmosphere of almost biblical *(cont. p. 94)*"

KEW GARDENS AND RICHMOND PARK. Large Victorian houses opposite Park and Kew Gardens, large self - contained bedsores, own modern kitchenette.

Richmond & Twickenham Times

THAT HISTORIC BUSH SPEECH IN FULL

MAH fellow Americans. Words fail me at this terrible time. So let's have a moment of silence while I think of something to say.

(Man hands him piece of paper)

Mah fellow Americans. Look solemn and read this out slowly. Ours is a nation based on freedom and democracy. These folks who live on the hill... no, that's a song. But it's an American song, and it's one I'm proud to sing. These folks who flew these planes into our American buildings had better know that we're going to seek them out wherever they may be, and bring them to justice. And of course democracy and freedom. They are cowardly men, who run away at the first sign of danger. I'm sorry, I've got to go now to my security bunker in Nebraska. But if any of these folks turn up here, don't tell them where I've gone.

God bless Arabia.

© G. W. Bush 2001.

WORLD WAR THREE

GOOD WILL TRIUMPH OVER EVIL

It's Official!

By Our Entire Staff B.L. ZEBUB

THE whole world was immensely reassured today when President George W. Bush announced that good will triumph over evil.

For centuries, philosophers and theologians have been engaged in anguished debate on this issue, and there has been considerable doubt, as the philosopher Spinoza put it, "which way the cookie is going to crumble".

Universal Relief

Following President Bush's categorical statements, stock markets recovered, old age pensioners danced in the streets and millions of terrorists rushed to hand in their weapons in the knowledge that, meta-physically speaking, as the great philosopher Kant once put it they were in a "no-win situation".

New York attack was foreseen by Nostradamus

by Mirror Staff **Phillipa Page**

THE ATTACK on the twin towers of the World Trade Center was precisely predicted in every detail more than 400 years ago by the French seer Nostradamus.

In 1559 he wrote:

Where two rivers meet, in the
land of the giant mouse,
There shall be fire in the sky,
and a bush will be seen
underground.

Says mediaeval scholar **Professor Fantoni** of the Department of Horoscopology at the University of Legova, Italy:

"Nostradamus's astonishingly prescient couplet begins with a clear reference to the meeting of New York's two rivers, which is exactly where the World Trade Center used to stand. He then continues, lest there be any doubt as to which country is being referred to, with an unmistakable allusion to Disneyworld in Florida, with its more-than-life-size emblem of Mickey, the 'giant mouse' cited by Nostradamus. Most astonishing of all is Nostradamus's vision of President Bush retiring to his undeground command bunker in Nebraska."

NEXT WEEK: How Nostradamus foresaw Iain Duncan Smith becoming elected as leader of the Tory Party.

DYKE APOLOGISES FOR BBC

by Our Media Staff

THE DIRECTOR General of the British Broadcasting Corporation Mr Greg Dyke apologised "for the BBC" in a statement issued last night.

"It was an error of judgement. It should never have been allowed to happen. It got out of control and degenerated into an unruly mess where no one knew what was happening. In fact, the only decent thing on it was Question Time."

Greg Dyke is delighted that Dimbleby will not now be Director General *(Surely "is 54"? Ed.)*

DAILY TABLOID

YOUR OWN FREE 3-MINUTE SILENCE

Readers are invited to join in the above silence as a mark of respect for the 328 Special Tragedy supplements that we have tragically been forced to publish this week *(Surely "tragic victims of the American tragedy"? Ed.)*

SPECIAL CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP SUBSCRIPTION CANCELLATION FORM

Dear Sir,

I was shocked and appalled by the cover/cartoon/article/crossword *(delete as applicable)* in the latest issue of Private Eye. I have been a reader for ..... years and have never been so offended. Please cancel my subscription at once.

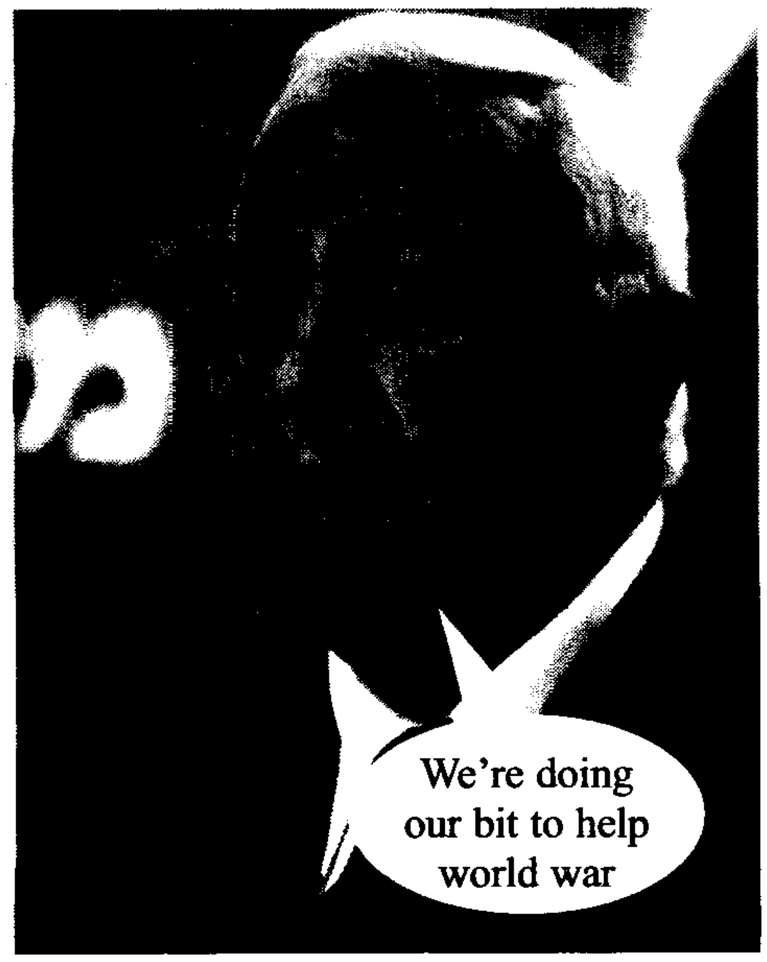
Name: .....

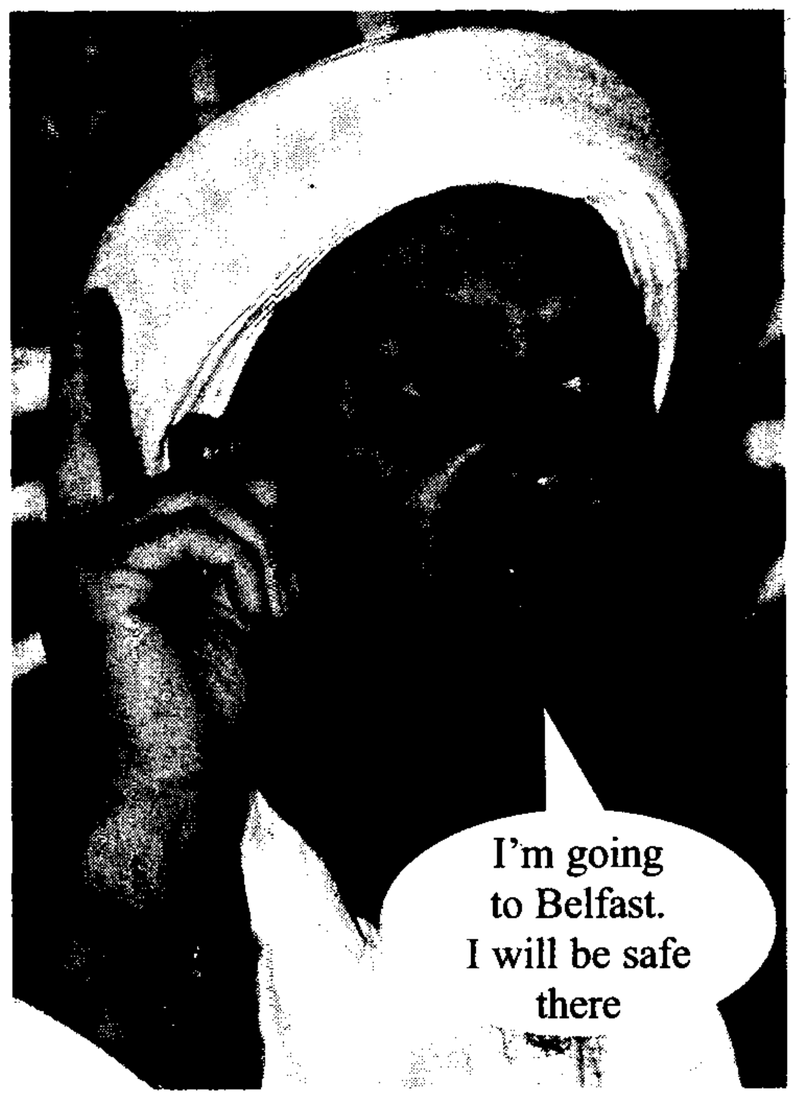
Address: .....

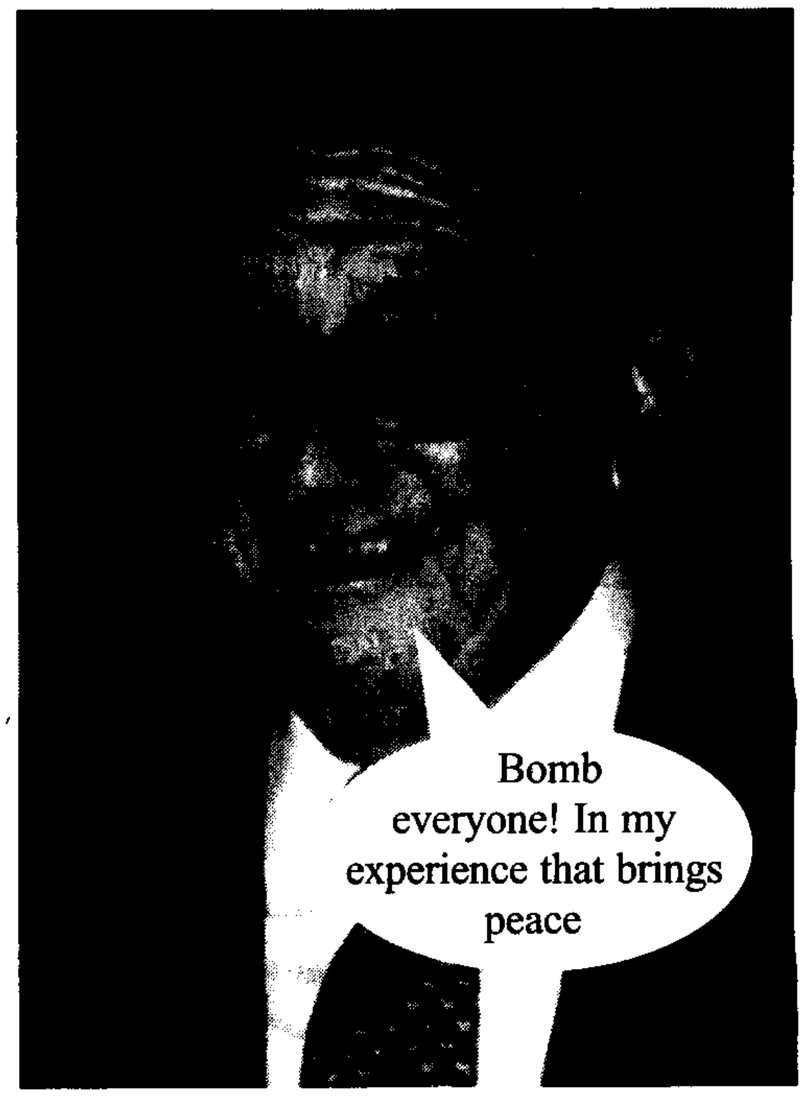
.....

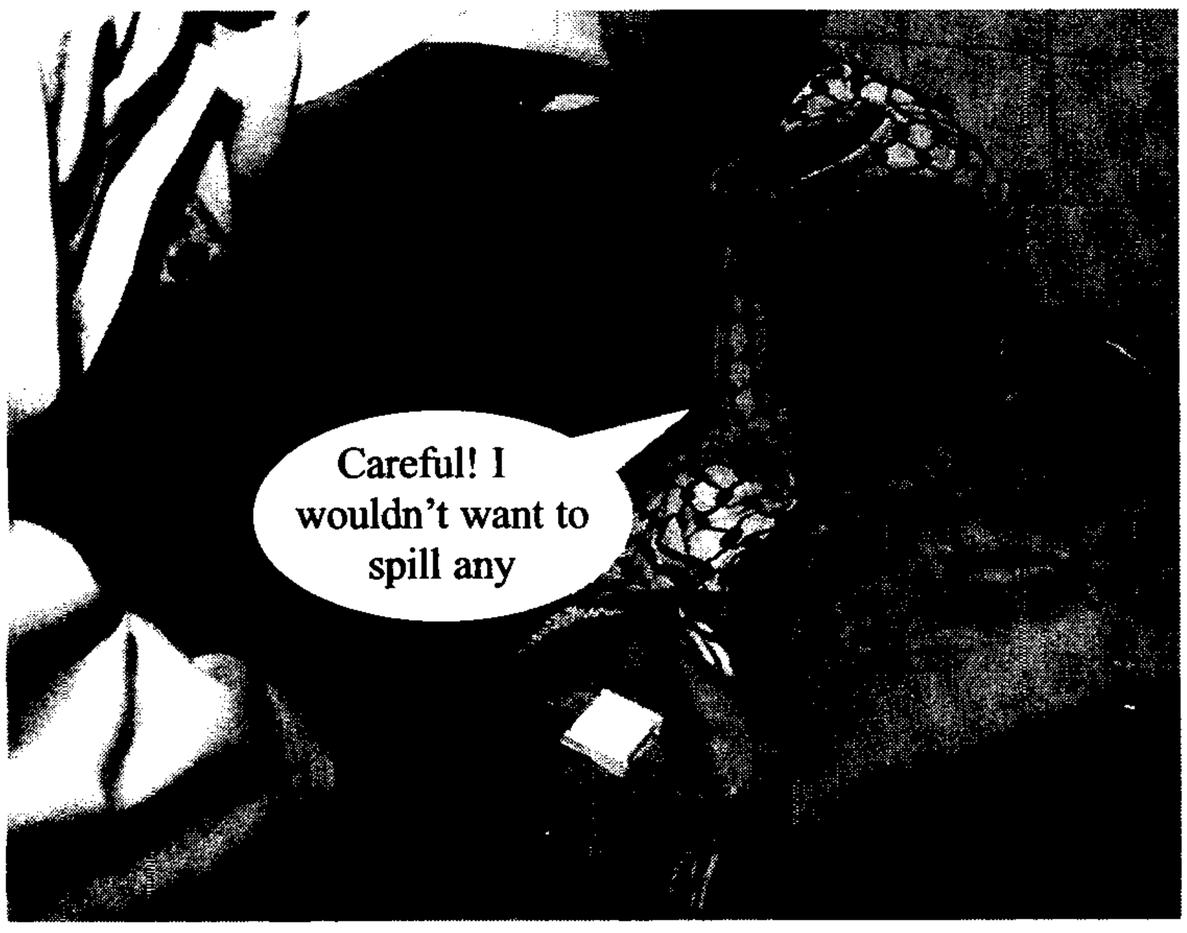
THE STORY IN PICTURES

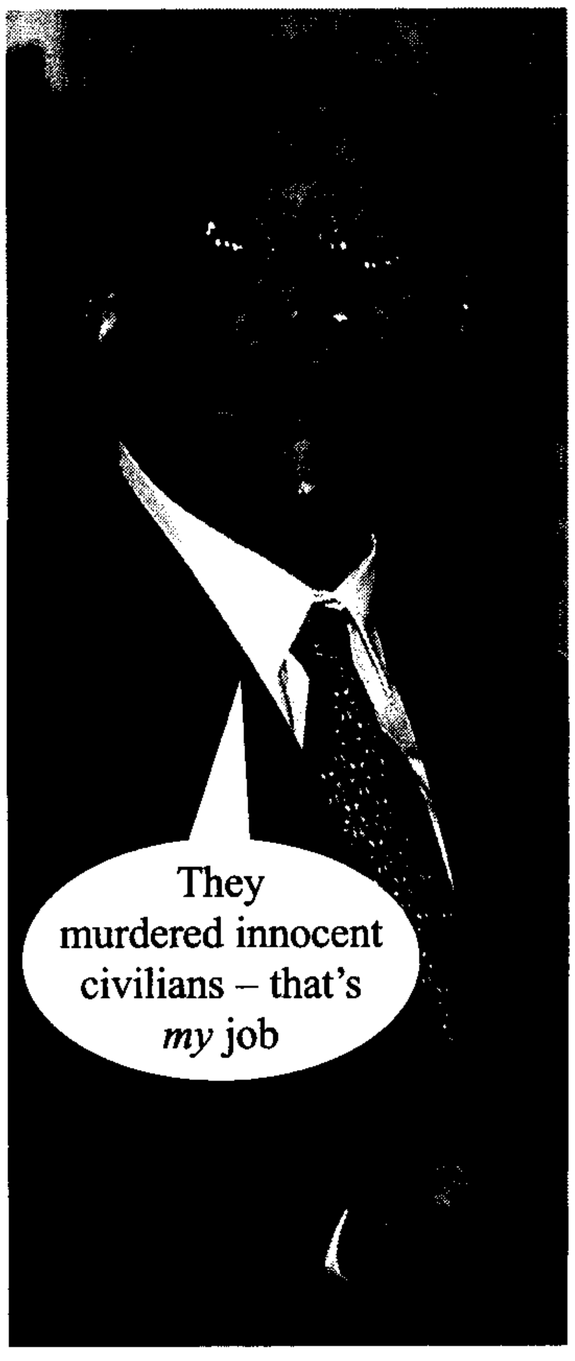
AN EYE SPECIAL

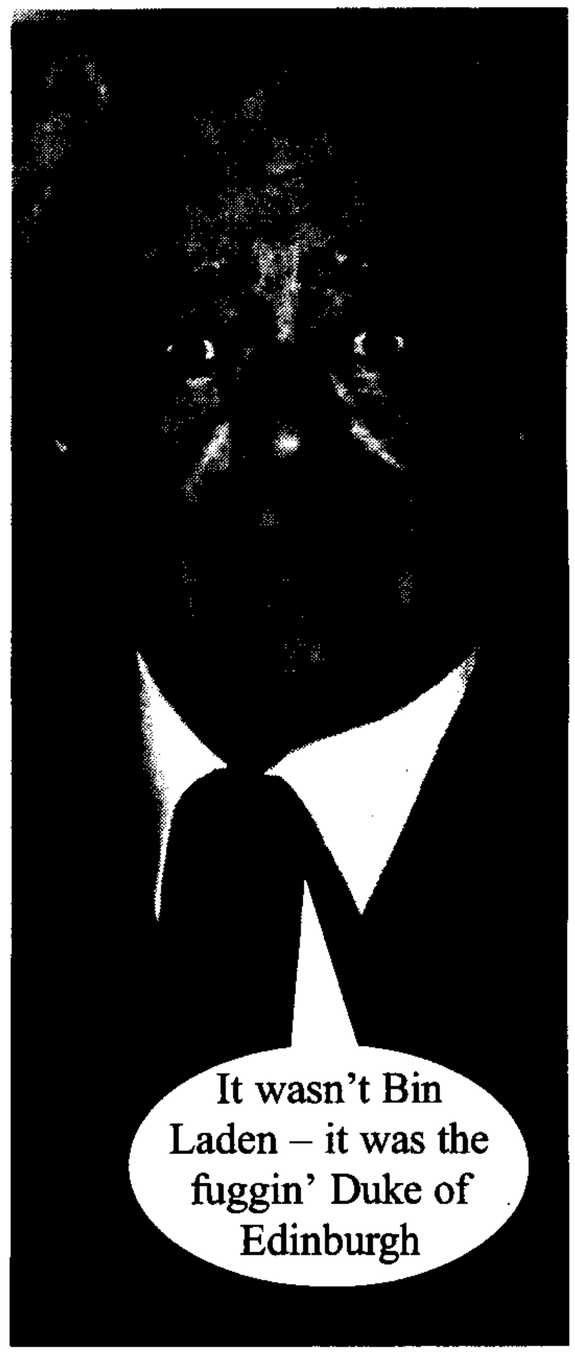












What You Missed

GREAT QUEENS OF BRITAIN

No. 94:

Queen David of Starkey

Presented by Simon Schama

(Tudor-style music on virginals)

Schama *(on battlements of mediaeval-type castle)*: It was not far from here that, in the year 2001, the middle-aged David Starkey launched his second crusade to become more famous than me.

(Re-enactment of two historians in armour preparing to joust in TV studio)

Schama: David had scored an enormous triumph with his "Elizabeth". It had soared to the top of the ratings, and the book had featured briefly in the best-seller list.

(Shot of Schama gently fingering priceless manuscript in British Museum)

Schama: But would its successor, "The Eight Wives of Henry The Sixth" (surely you mean "The Six Wives of Salman Rushdie"? Ed.) be any good?

(Actor dressed as Queen David walks round Hampton Court Maze, accompanied by Tudor-style lute music. Cut to Starkey kneeling in gothic-style chapel, praying that his series would be successful)

Schama: But, tragically, it was not to be. The people of England looked fondly back to the good old days of the year 2000, when they had feasted on the far superior series "A History of Britain" by myself.

(Mass crowd scene involving three TV extras in Tudor-style doublets and hose, running across field with M25 visible in background)

Crowd: Down with the Old Queen! Long live King Schama.

(Cut to Queen David being beheaded on Tower Hill by Channel Four executive)

Executioner: You're for the chop.

PROPERTY CORNER

HAMPDEN ROAD, N8

A two bedroom, two reception conversion close to Hornsey British Rail and Turnpike Lane tube.

£120,000 L/H

Advertisement, Haringey Advertiser

IDEAL FIRST PURCHASE
£122,000

Kingston Property Weekly

"I wouldn't say it was a posh area, but you do see lots of 4x4s doing the school run"

WETHERSPOON'S BID TO CHANGE LABOUR POLICY ON EURO

RACISM CONFERENCE APOLOGY

by Our International Affairs Correspondent **Ray Cist**

AN APOLOGY has been issued for the anti-racism conference in Durban, despite fears of a last-minute attempt to block it.

"The conference has been an horrendous waste of people and resources that demeaned everyone involved in it," said one dismayed delegate, "and we hope that the people of the world will never again have to experience such horrendous humbug."

As they left, the delegates made clear their feelings that in the modern world there is no place for appalling conferences such as this.

Exclusive Serialisation Of The Spy Book Of The Millennium

MONEYRAKER

BY JAMES BOND

Chapter 94

"MR BOND. So good of you to drop in."

Bond struggled against the steel wire pinning him to the chair in the control centre of Ernst Blofeld's underwater mountain lair.

"You disappoint me, Mr Bond. And now you will suffer a slow and painful death," continued Blofeld, laughing sinisterly.

"What have you got in mind?" spat Bond. "The rotating saw? The tank full of piranha fish? The laser gun directed at my testicles?"

Blofeld stroked his white cat and laughed again.

"Oh no, Mr Bond. I have something worse in mind. I am going to read you extracts from Stella Rimington's memoirs."

"You bastard," whimpered Bond as Blofeld produced a copy of the Guardian from behind his back and cleared his throat.

"The day I ordered more paper clips..."

Tomorrow: *How Bond escaped, skiied down a mountain, jumped on a helicopter, parachuted off a dam and abseiled into the offices of Hutchinson in order to flog the publishers his memoirs.*

"Gotta light!??!"

WELDON 'PRODUCT PLACEMENT'

READERS were shocked today after they discovered at least twelve mentions of the name 'Fay Weldon' on the front pages of their newspaper.

"We were duped into reading these stories thinking it was proper news," said one angry reader, "but in fact it was nothing more than a thinly veiled plug for her new sponsored book."

School news

St Cakes

Celebrity Term begins today. There are 1,412 children of celebrities in the school. B. Beckham (Spice's) is Senior Celeb. Ms M. Winslet (Titanic's) is Head Toddler. O.K. Magazine (Desmond's) is Keeper of the Photos. The Rev. M. Barrymore has had to retire, following a swimming accident, and will be replaced as Chaplin by Father Max Clifford. Mr and Mrs Neil Hamilton have joined the domestic staff as matron and odd-job man. Catwalks will be on Nov. 14. A performance of *The Graduate* will take place in the Groucho Theatre (auditions for mothers of children currently in the school will be on Oct. 12. Apply to C. Macintosh, head of drama). The O.C. Dinner (guest of honour Nigella Lawson O.C.) will be at Paparazzi's, on Dec. 24 (for tickets, apply Richard Branson, Dunvirgin, Carey Street). Raps will be on Dec 12.

Illiteracy in children has risen, says study

ILITERACY among youngsters in 2001 is higher than before the First World War,

Argus (Brighton)

Carpenter nailed in the head, but no brain damage

Daily Nation, SA

WORLD'S GREATEST MARRIAGE SINKS

by Our Disaster Staff
Titanick Ross

THEY said it was unsinkable. It was the most modern and up-to-date marriage the world had ever seen. But just three years out, Kate Winslet's marriage hit the rocks and sank within minutes.

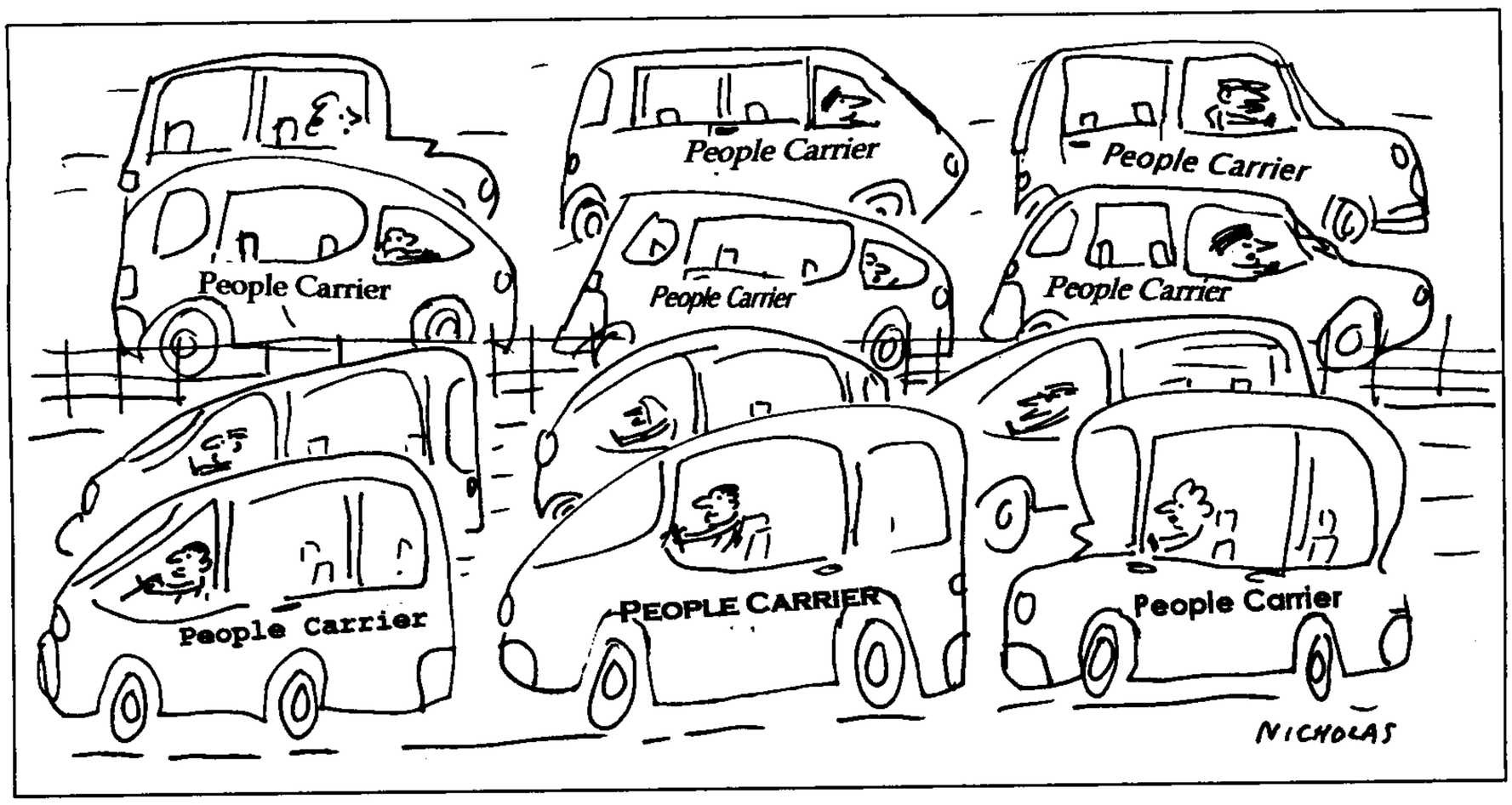
No one could believe it. The famous marriage was no more.

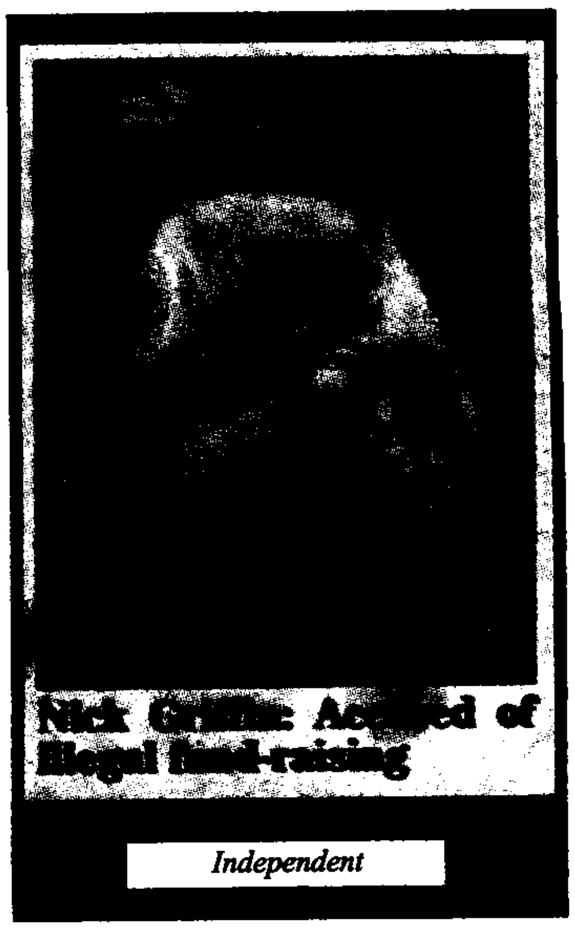
Said one onlooker, "It was a night to remember. I saw Kate jumping overboard with her baby, leaving her husband to go down alone.

"He was obviously hoping for a rescue, but the marriage was fatally holed beneath the waterline."

Experts agreed that there was no hope of any salvage and that the nation's flagship marriage would have to be left where it foundered.

Plans to turn the doomed marriage into a blockbuster movie are already underway and there is speculation that the late Irish Murdoch will take the role of the tragic Kate Winslet.





Nick Griffin Accused of Illegal fund-raising

Independent

IDS NAMES HIS TEAM

by Our Political Staff **Hugh Cares**

THE NEW leader of the Conservative Party last night unveiled the team that is going to take the Tories into oblivion (Surely "power in the next election"?)

The new-look Shadow Cabinet that will rewrite the political map includes a mix of traditional heavy-hitters mixed with fresh new talent that will give the front bench a much-needed facelift.

OUT GOES
The bloke whose name you can't remember

OUT GOES
The fat bloke in the pin-striped suit

IN COMES
A man who you've never heard of

IN COMES
A pin-striped suit with a fat man in it. *(That's enough team. Ed.)*

'TORIANITY IS DEAD' Admits Leader

by Our Religious Staff **Lucy Canon**

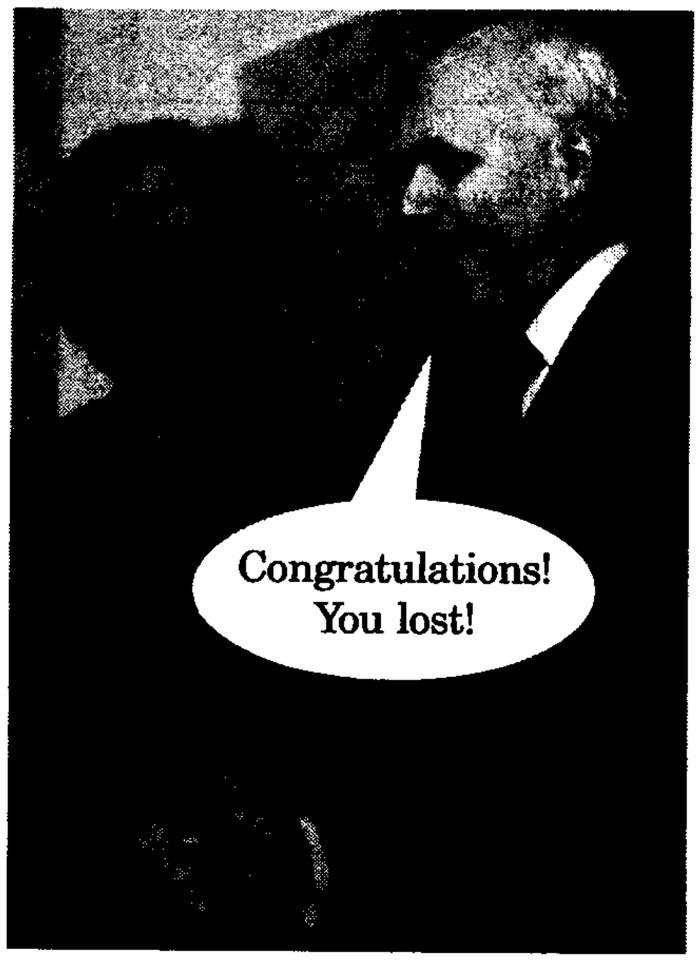
A SENIOR Conservative has admitted that Britain is "no longer a Conservative country".

"No one believes in it any more," he told worshippers (Sid and Doris Duncan Smith). "It used to be the backdrop to national life, but now it is just irrelevant. Faith in the basic tenets of Conservatism has dwindled away to nothing."

He further claimed that the Conservatives of England (CofE) faced a future as a small sect who no longer appealed to the mainstream.

Said one regular Conservative-goer, "We used to be a broad chuch, but now we are the Tory Party without a prayer."

POISON CHALICE RESULT ANNOUNCED



Exclusive To All Tory Papers

APOLOGY

IN RECENT years, in common with all other newspapers, the fact we didn't run a single article about Iain Duncan Smith may have given our readers the mistaken impression that he was at best a political pygmy, no more than mere flotsam and jetsam amid the sea of talented and charismatic figures who abound in the Conservative party, a man whose only discernible role in the Shadow Cabinet in the run up to the last election was to make William Hague seem interesting.

We now realise in light of the fact he's been elected as leader that nothing of course could be further from the truth, and that Iain Duncan Smith is a colossus bestriding the political landscape of our country, the only man to captain the Conservative party through the dangerous waters that lie ahead and find them safe harbour in the hearts and minds of the British people, a man who skilfully managed to maintain a low profile in the run-up to the last election so as not to have tainted himself with the party's failure that time round.

We apologise for any confusion caused and any confusion in the future when in four years' time a broken and defeated Iain Duncan Smith is challenged by Someone Else for the leadership, and we try and convince the country that Someone Else is in fact a colossus bestriding the political etc, etc, etc...

NEW TORY LEADER
IT'S A PITY, I'M FOND OF KEN, HE LIKES A DRINK OR THREE, FOND OF HIS GRUB, AND THE ODD FAG AND JAZZ, A REAL PERSON IN FACT
I LIKE THE WAY DUNCAN SMITH SAYS 'YES, MR BUSH ANYTHING YOU SAY MR BUSH' I LIKE THE CUT OF HIS JIB
NOW WE'VE GOT A CLEAN SLATE, A FRESH START, WE MUST BE SEEN TO SUPPORT OUR NEW LEADER! NO MORE BICKERING! TOTAL LOYALTY IS THE LEAST WE CAN OFFER
NOW YOU KNOW WHY HE LOST
..WELL FOR A, START I CAN'T STAND DAVID DAVIS, OR MICHAEL HOWARD, HE MAKES MY FLESH CREEP.....
YES, JUST THE SORT OF CHAP WE NEED TO GET US OUT OF EUROPE AND FORGET ALL ABOUT THE EURO. BEFORE YOU KNOW IT NO SELF RESPECTING ASYLUM SEEKER WILL WANT TO COME HERE
IT'S WONDERFUL ABOUT MICHAEL ANCRAM ISN'T IT? HE'LL BE THE 13th MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN ONE DAY, SO HELL KNOW WHAT THE MAN ON HIS MOBILE ON THE CLAPHAM OMNIBUS IS THINKING
HELP!

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

Scientists in bid to discover world's funniest joke 2

Iain Duncan Smith elected Tory leader 3

Scientists discover world's funniest joke 4

hyhyhyhyyhy hyhyhyyhy

SDLP Mayor of Coleraine John Dallat has called on the RUC to revoke prisoner early release licences after a spate of pipe bomb attacks in Derry

Irish Times

DIARY

VICTORIA BECKHAM

Having a baby isn't easy, you know. A lot of people forget it mears being pregnant for up to nine months or more, quite apart from the whole thing of actually giving birth.

I'll never forget Brooklyn being born. If I had to put it in one word, I'd say it was a so like totally unreal experience. But in another way it was one of the realest experiences of my life. If you can imagine somewhere not real exactly and not unreal exactly but like mid-way between real and unreal, and not just normal, you'll have some idea of what it was like. No other word will do.

I couldn't of done it without David. He was with me all the way, hovering over me, videoing everything for the family photo album. "I got it well-focused on your tummy-button, babe," he told me.

"But that's not where he's due to come out, babe," I told him, "The doctor says it's lower down."

Sure enough, a baby came out. He looked just like a baby, all small and not at all adult or what you'd call mature. For instance, he couldn't speak when he first came out, so he couldn't tell us his name. So we thought of our favourite places. David liked Basingstoke but there wasn't enough room to tattoo it on his body so Brooklyn it was.

There's a big difference between Posh Spice and Victoria Beckham. Posh Spice is part of Victoria Beckham and always will be, but only part. It's hard to say which part exactly, but I'd guestimate it was somewhere roughly near the middle, between the Victoria and the Beckham.

I never follow fashion. I believe in being myself and not being ruled by the top designers. Like, when I'm just slouching round the house, I might not feel like wearing my Manolo Blahnik high heels with my Versace black leather dress all the time. I prefer to relax and do my own thing and bring out my Victoria Beckham side, maybe teaming some Gucci snakeskin boots with a Vivienne Westwood basque.

Honest, it doesn't make any difference to us that we're rich. There's only so much you can do with money, like spend it. The mistake people are always making is thinking you need money to dress like me. Puh-leeeasse. When I go into Prada or Versace, they always let me have everything for free. Like a lot of celebrities, they're really down to earth and they've become really good friends to me and David, letting us have so many presents for nothing. Donatella Versace even said she'd let us choose five really great matching suits and dresses for like totally free if we called our next baby Versace, which was really sweet of her. I thought it was a lovely idea, but David said he thought it was a bit tacky. So we're going to call it Donna Karan instead, Don if it's a boy.

As a Spice Girl, I've travelled all over the world, including abroad. Paris – full of French and tray elegant. Rome – very old but great if you like pasta. America – as big as they say it is. Japan – much more Japanese than you'd imagine. Madrid – the fashion centre of Italy.

But me and David are very grounded, very down-to-earth. We'd never want to live anywhere but England except for really good tax reasons. At our home in the English countryside, we live very normal English lives. Good old fish 'n' chips is our absolutely fave meal, and we really appreciate it when Marco Pierre agrees to drop round to cook it for us. Afterwards we make sure of keeping our feet firmly on the ground by popping down to the pub we built in the basement to mix with the ordinary people we've hired specially. They're used to behaving towards me and David not as so-called "international superstars" but as totally down-to-earth human beings who don't want to be treated any differently to any other employers.

The whole fame thing can be a real drag. Sometimes, you just want to live a totally normal private life, and not be filmed and photographed as like this amazing fashion icon wherever you go. The other day, I was talking to Kate Moss and Amber Valetta and Janet Jackson at the opening of the new Salvatore Ferragamo shop in Milan and we were all agreed that we wished the paparazzi could leave us alone for one moment. Like, why must these photographers see everything as a photo-opportunity? I mean, really!

I'd fight to the end to preserve my privacy: just me and David and Brooklyn and all our friends from *Hello!* magazine, without the constant barrage of press intrusion. Like, the other day, I went on a national radio show to publicise my new autobiography, *Learning To Flap*, and the interviewer kept asking me all these like really personal questions, like what was my favourite song and did I ever have a pet as a child, and I was totally freaked, no other word will do, and I'm like, "What are you prying into my private life for, why don't you lay off, this is so Marilyn Monroe."

Sometimes it worries me that Geri Halliwell has found the whole fame thing too much. But at least it won't last much longer for her, thank God. On the other hand, I'd hate to see her vanish into obscurity, just when she's beginning to establish herself as someone who really wants to be a star just so long as she can show the hard work, determination and self-belief to conquer those looks of hers.

But I don't just want to be the world's greatest singer-songwriter of all time, you'll also catch me down in the gym every morning training to be our leading classical actress, like the second Liz Hurley. And believe me I hope Geri succeeds with her ambitions to be an actress, because it's sad she hasn't got a husband. If she sticks at it, with her looks she could easily be the next Dot Cotton, but only if she does something about her thighs, bless her.

Girl Power!

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

THIS INTERVIEW PIECE ABOUT ME HERE ISN'T VERY NICE ABOUT ME, JOHNSON.
:SIGH:
MAGAZINE
YOU KNOW, IT REALLY HURTS WHEN THESE JOURNALISTS GO AWAY AND WRITE NASTY NEGATIVE ARTICLES LIKE THIS ABOUT STARS SUCH AS MYSELF..
DOES IT?
WELL IT HITS ME ON A VERY PERSONAL LEVEL JOHNSON. IT'S A BLOW TO MY SELF-ESTEEM..
WHAT, A FEW SNIDE COMMENTS IN PRINT, SIR?
YES. IT SHOWS I'M NOT "BIG" ENOUGH TO DEMAND FULL COPY APPROVAL... IT'S EMBARRASSING..

Literary Review

Mything you already

Iris Murdoch: A Life
Peter J. Conradi
(HarperCollins, £24.99)

IN WHICH, at fantastic length (700 pages), the body of the late Dame Iris Murdoch, borne on the shields of practically every 20th century cultural tribune you care to mention, is carried off to Valhalla, there to talk through eternity with Heidegger, Wittgenstein and many another ornament of the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought.

What might be called the Murdoch myth began a good many years ago, well before her well-publicised Alzheimer twilight and eventual death in February 1999. Her husband John Bayley's trilogy of memoirs — each of which tottered shakily along the fine line that separates humane simplicity from embarrassment — took the process a stage further. Now, with the appearance of her longtime chum Peter J. Conradi's mammoth biography, the image of that bright, brainy, luminous and faintly dotty presence is carved into the mountainside forever.

Whatever Kate Winslet and Dame Judi Dench can come up with in the impending widescreen frolic will be no more than a pendant. The real — or rather, the official — Murdoch is here in the back-jacket Snowdon photo of a worrying, intense looking young woman with a pudding basin trim enveloped in cigarette smoke as she frowns over a typewriter.

There is no doubt at all that Prof Conradi has done a fairish job in getting all this stuff down on paper, even if the whole thing periodically threatens to dissolve into a syrup of sheer good feeling. No doubt, either, that it would be difficult on this, or any other, evidence to dislike Iris Murdoch who, whatever one might think of her increasingly impenetrable novels, went through life acting as a wholly beneficial influence on the minds of nearly everyone she touched. What can be called into question, though, is the whole basis on which literary lives like this, and the books written to celebrate them, may be said to exist.

Much is made, from start to finish, from schoolgirl to venerable sage, of Murdoch's supposed uniqueness: Conradi quotes the late Lorna Sage's encomium, pronounced in a letter to the bereaved husband, to her "originality and energy and daring". And yet what emerges from this file of books, lovers, friends and foreign and domestic travel, is an oddly familiar kind of English literary life.

There are the distinctly un-English origins (in this case Ireland). There is, inevitably, Oxford, here — at any rate in its pre-war stage — depicted with an unreality that out-Brideshead Brideshead. There is the youthful rebelliousness (Communism as if you didn't know). There is the sex — lashings of that — and the weirdy foreign influences (check out in particular Conradi's account of her dealings with Elias Canetti). And there is that eternal moneyed background of happy legacies, nice houses — even if the triumphant squalor of the Murdoch ménage at Steeple Clinton was thought by one guest to be "beyond bohemianism" — and leisured chat.

This is not sour grapes, by the way, simply an acknowledgment that most 20th century literary life has taken place in a spiritual Habitat showroom. And, finally, there is the almost complete detachment of the mid-to-late career: a creative self-absorption impinged on by, among other things, 80s Tory education policies and, famously, the loathsome striking mineworkers.

It is instructive to compare all this with another increasingly myth-ridden figure of the same literary generation, the late Sir Kingsley Amis, recently memorialised once again in Richard Bradford's Lucky Him (Peter Owen, £22.50) Leaving aside lots about sex and Oxford, Prof Bradford is keen to emphasize his subject's theoretical distance from the girl he succeeded on the executive committee of the Oxford University Labour Club, suggesting at one point that Amis "hated Murdoch's implied thesis that reality was a shroud for more complex states and registers and the broader implication that literature should be a vehicle for exploring philosophical conundrums". Instantly, you feel, the two of the principal currents of post-war English fiction are revealed and differentiated: on the one hand Lucky Jim-style slapstick, on the other brainy sex pantos.

Curiously, though, the end result — at any rate in personal terms — was the same: as we all know, Amis spent his last years holed up in the Garrick raging against the evil lefties. It is a sad fact that no English literary life seems to be able to end these day without the demon figure of Arthur Scargill capering at the window. However far removed in style, worldview and creative impulse, in the end Murdoch and Amis turn out to represent different sides of the same coin. There is something infinitely depressing in this realisation. As Iris Murdoch: A Life unwittingly demonstrates, we need new myths.

Closed book

Backing into the Limelight
Alexander Games
(Headline, £18.99)

IN newspaper journalism, celebrities who refuse to be interviewed are usually told, through their PR representatives: "He ought to know that we'll be running a piece anyway." The implication is clear: hostile profile or potentially softer conversation.

The writer Alexander Games

"Congratulations! It's a book..."

has taken much this line in publishing a biography of Alan Bennett, even though the subject and all of his significant friends and colleagues refused to cooperate with the book. The problem is that, at volume-length, the absence of the subject is more of a problem than in a mere article. You keep feeling that the author has failed.

With Bennett, there's another difficulty. Though theoretically a recluse, Bennett is in fact J.D. Salinger one week and Vanessa Feltz the next. He chatted away to Humphrey Carpenter for a book on satire; he cheerfully revealed, in a lengthy *New Yorker* profile, that he was bisexual. So there's an uneasy feeling throughout this 300-page biography without access that Bennett simply doesn't want to talk to the author of this book.

As a result, Games is left hoovering up facts from the writers Bennett would talk to and possible clues in the work. Knowing from the *New Yorker* that Bennett met Anne Davies when she cleaned his house, Games desperately suggests: "Some time around 1979, Alan Bennett must have felt that needed someone to dust or clean the accumulated scripts, books and other possessions that were cluttering his shelves and mantelpiece. The woman who came into his home, and eventually his life, was Anne Davies."

Alternatively, of course, Bennett might have been troubled by a nasty ring round the bath or a stubborn stain on the lavvy. Neither we nor Games will ever know unless Bennett puts it in his diaries. Later, in a particularly desperate example of the seance school of life-writing, Games guesses that Bennett's failure to publish his diaries for 1991 and 1992 (as he had for other years) may have been because of serious illness, but then instantly contradicts himself by saying that Bennett can't have been that bad because he wrote *The Madness Of George III* during this time.

Perhaps aware that it has so far been a graceful cuttings job, the book ends with a post-modern coda in which the author explains how he tried to catch his prey but failed. He combines a family walking weekend in Yorkshire with a call on Anne Davies, the lover whom the reclusive writer who never gives interviews chose to disclose in a conversation with the *New Yorker*.

Games takes tea with Davies. But whatever she gave him to eat, Games serves up ham in his account: "As I talked, for the first

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
IT'S A VERY PAINFUL EXPERIENCE - AND THEN ONCE YOU'VE DELIVERED, NOBODY TAKES YOU SERIOUSLY
MISCONCEPTIONS
NAOMI WOLF
YEAH - I'D STICK TO HAVING BABIES DEAR!

time in months I could feel the weight slipping from my shoulders. I didn't apologise for sounding emotional. I knew that, whatever happened, I had done the right thing by coming to see Anne."

The closest there has ever been to a Mrs Alan Bennett urges the biographer to return by train the following week ("I sat stewing for a further two hours, my chest again rigid with tension") in the hope of an introduction. But, when Bennett spots the biographer over a hedge, he drives away.

This final chapter is a clue that Games might claim to be extending an existing genre of unwanted biographies. Michael Crick brilliantly turned over Jeffrey Archer without permission. When Ian Hamilton was blocked by the writer of *The Catcher In The Rye*, he responded with the impressive *In Search Of JD Salinger*, in which the noes became part of the prose. More recently, David Sexton has profiled the un-interviewed recluse who created Hannibal Lecter in *The Strange World Of Thomas Harris*.

Each of these far superior volumes, though, offers a lesson to Games in where he went wrong. Crick was dealing with a figure whose life had been lived noisily in public, leaving a trail of documents and witnesses. *Salinger* was taking the only possible approach to a writer who has been entirely consistent in his invisibility. Sexton's book was deliberately short and made no pretence of getting closer than it had.

In contrast, Games on Bennett takes on a habitually private man who has, however, cooperated with a few interviewers and does so at a length disproportionate to the information possessed. Part of the comic world of Alan Bennett is that his parents baptised his brother with the name Gordon. You frequently find yourself invoking the dramatist's sibling's name aloud as you follow the desperate suppositions into which Games is forced.

Books & Bookmen

■ THE World Trade Center atrocity saw Orion head honcho Anthony "Fatty" Cheetham displaying the tact and sensitivity for which he is renowned.

In an editorial meeting on Wednesday, just 24 hours after the New York and Washington incidents, the appallingly rude Old Etonian announced that he had inked a deal with the *Observer* to rush out a full-colour illustrated book on the whole situation. One person present at the meeting described the proposal as "lurid" and indicated that the whole room was "shocked".

One important question is: who came up with the concept? Did Fatty dream it up, go for the main chance and woo the Guardian Media Group into co-operating, or was the *Absurder* touting the project around within minutes of the news breaking? If the latter, one can only assume that former Weidenfeld editorial director Toby Mundy, who as head of Grove Atlantic UK now runs the *Grauniad*'s own imprint, baulked at the prospect of publishing such a book. If so, perhaps Fatty should take lessons in decency from his former protégé.

■ THE decision by Ashworth Hospital, Merseyside to bring an injunction against the importers of *The Gates of Janus*, the book written by Ashworth inmate Ian Brady, betrayed a touchingly old-fashioned view of the way territoriality works in the modern publishing world. In simple terms, it doesn't.

Fifteen years ago, when Margaret Thatcher banned Peter Wright's *Spycatcher*, it was hard enough trying to stem the flow of copies being brought in from Australia. Eventually, the ban was lifted and the book went on sale openly in the UK.

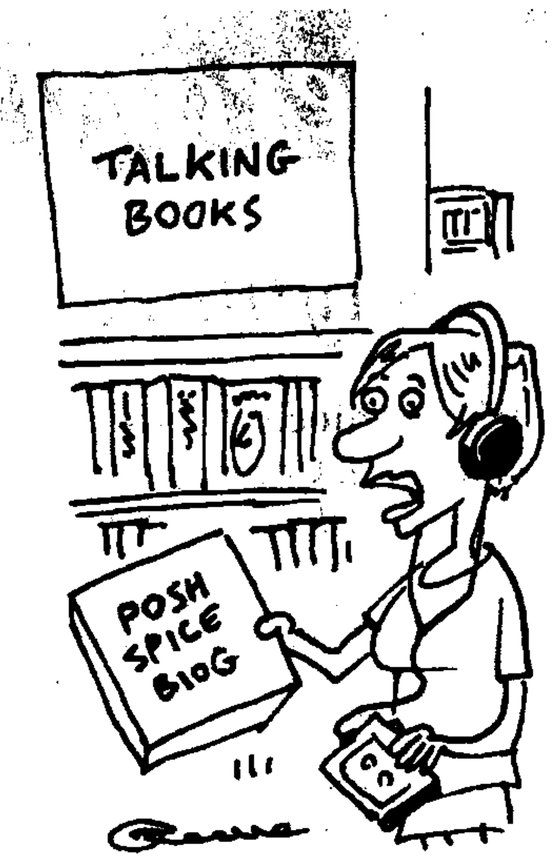
Now, with the likes of Amazon happily shipping books from overseas to UK customers, territorial bans have become unenforceable. Earlier this year, the Government tried to bar *The Big Breach*, fugitive ex-spook Richard Tomlinson's book about his time as an MI5 officer from entering the UK. However, copies soon found their way in from Russia via the internet, before Scottish publisher Main-stream went ahead with a UK edition. In each case, the result of a ban has been to draw greater attention to a book of dubious merit that would otherwise have slipped into the remainder shops largely unheralded.

Adam Parfrey, of the book's US publisher Feral House, has been reported in the press as saying that the Ashworth challenge has "no merit whatsoever" as it does not compromise patient confidentiality. In terms of bumping up sales and gaining column inches, however, it should merit a great deal of gratitude to the hospital from Parfrey.

■ SO, which is true? The *Sunday Telegraph* report that quotes Lord Archer's art dealer friend Chris Beetles as saying that the disgraced peer is "wonderfully perky" and "doing a lot of writing" in prison, correcting the proofs for his next book as well as working on a new novel on life behind bars.

Or the *Sunday Mirror*'s report that Lord Archole is devoting most of his time to taking advantage of the basic literacy classes offered at Wayland prison? The two aren't necessarily inconsistent, but both together, taken with Richard Cohen's recent explanations of the, er, intensive editorial processes involved in readying an Archer book, mean that the proofs he is correcting must make very interesting reading for the poor people at HarpicCollins who have to decrypt them."

■ A TASTEFUL letter from Frederick Forsyth appeared in the



"She's miming!"

Sunday Telegraph last week. Amid much foaming at the mouth about what the west must do, he told readers that 18 years ago, following news that a Hizbollah suicide bomber had driven a truck into the side of a US barracks in Beirut, killing 241 marines, he had "a what-if idea" for a book.

"Supposing that young martyr had flying training," Freddie wondered. "Could he not fly an airliner instead of a truck into the side of a skyscraper? I never used the idea because I did not believe that the average reader would give the notion credibility." He also ditched the plot because "basic research indicated that once you had got your suicide fanatic on your team, it was all too horribly feasible and there was no defence. I tried never to describe a lethal scheme that could be imitated by terrorists."

Would it be overly cynical to suggest that Forsyth's motivation in sending this letter about a book he never wrote has more to do with providing *Torygraph* readers with a gentle reminder of the one he has just written — *The Veteran*?

Bookworm

Pseuds Corner

She caused shockwaves as a necrophiliac in Kissed. *Now she's back in two new roles – a lap-dancer and a motel clerk who beds all the guests. Molly Parker tells Emma Brockes why these parts will help women gain respect.*

Guardian

My life is the result of a war between destiny and magic.

IMAM (MRS DAVID BOWIE)
Mail on Sunday

In the language of football, the backheel is the equivalent of the semi-colon. Abused by show-offs, it is employed sparingly by those who understand its function as a device for changing the direction of thought while maintaining continuity of meaning.

RICHARD WILLIAMS
Guardian

[Gerard] Houllier is shaping up as the Diderot of the Anfield dugout, an adenalin-addicted philosopher alive to Liverpool's idiosyncratic sociology and the special place occupied by the Merseyside soccer psyche. Bent on appending a chapter of his own to the club's legendary

narrative, he is, in a sense, a postmodern manager, a figure befitting a period when football has become a furiously self-conscious industry.

NEIL BERRY
New Statesman

It could be said that an underlying sense of funk is the key to most good creative endeavours, and Flash sites should be no exception to the rule. Although the grey minimalism of nooflat might put off those in love with more obviously technicoloured digital eye-candy, the subtle ductility of the site has a nicely submerged groove that amply repays the attentive, soft-clicking visitor. Ambient core for the scopically weary.

'10 best sites of the week: www.nooflat.nu'
Independent

Pseuds Corporate

It [the account win] arose from discussions with AstraZeneca about how Jango could apply our strategic and tactical capabilities, and bring a communications focus onto the successful entry of major new brands through integrated strategies.

MAGGIE MALPAS-SPENCER (MD, Jango Communications)
PR Week

The new brand, 02, embodies the company's ambition to provide essential, lifestyle-enabling mobile services to its customers. The company's strategy is to create one customer brand across its European footprint.

The *Financial Times* website on BT wireless, the mobile business of BT

CONTRIBUTORS: Michael Grosvenor Myer, Chris Taylor, Kenny Bambrick, Jon Smith, Michael Forster, 'Janice', David Drewienka.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

LOCKERBIE: MANLY PURSUIT

ONE journalistic casualty of last week's American atrocities was a genuine news scoop in the *Daily Mirror*. On the morning of the bombings, the paper had led its front page with the headline: LOCKERBIE: THE LOST EVIDENCE.

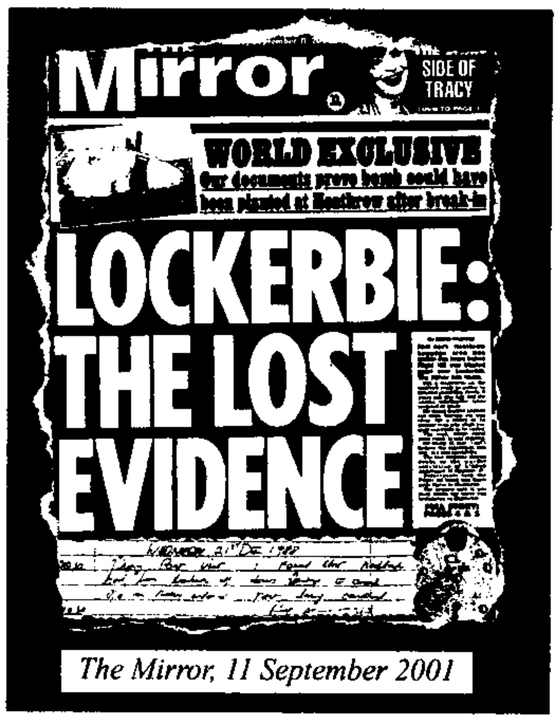
The story revealed that in the early hours of 21 December 1988, a security guard at Heathrow, Ray Manly, was on a routine round of airport buildings when he came across an unlocked door to a Pan-am baggage area. The padlock on the door had been professionally cut in two, and the baggage area exposed to intruders.

Mr Manly wrote a report on an incident form, reproduced in the *Mirror*. "During post visit I found that padlock had been broken off doors leading to outside". He kept the broken padlock. The following day Pan-am flight 103 was loaded with baggage, some of which came from the area broken into. It took off for New York and soon after 7pm was blown out of the sky by a bomb in its hold, apparently placed in a hard-shell Samsonite suitcase.

The *Mirror* story, by David Pilditch, revealed that Mr Manly, who has since retired, was interviewed a month later – in January 1989 – by an officer from the team investigating the Lockerbie bombing. He remembers that the officer's name was Robson. (There was indeed a senior police officer called Robson who helped with the police investigations into Lockerbie). Mr Manly signed a statement and handed over the broken padlock. According to the *Mirror*, the statement was "lost".

Manly was not called to give evidence at the fatal accident inquiry in Dumfries 11 years ago, at which security over baggage at Heathrow before the bombing was examined in great detail. Nor was he called to give evidence at the long trial of two Libyans at Camp Zeist, Holland, last year. When the trial ended in January, he was appalled that his evidence had been ignored.

He contacted the legal authorities in Scotland and gave a statement to them. He was put in touch with the defence team representing the Libyan who was convicted at Camp Zeist of murdering the Lockerbie victims but is appealing against his conviction. Mr Manly gave a statement to them too. Several weeks later, exasperated by continued silence and delay, he contacted the Daily Mirror.



The Mirror, 11 September 2001

The importance of his evidence cannot be over-emphasised. The identity of the airport at which the bomb suitcase was put on the plane is absolutely fundamental to the prosecution case against the Libyans. Essential to their argument was that the bomb suitcase was smuggled on to a plane at Malta, taken off at Frankfurt, reloaded on to another plane, flown to Heathrow, unloaded again and eventually reloaded on to Pan-am 103. No evidence whatever was produced to show that the bomb suitcase went on the flight from Malta. The judges described this as the weakest aspect of the prosecution case.

There was also very little and very dubious evidence that the bomb suitcase went on at Frankfurt. On the other hand, there *was* evidence that it went on originally at Heathrow. Baggage handler John Bedford, who was interviewed only days after the bombing, and did give evidence at the 1990 fatal accident inquiry and at Camp Zeist last year, said he clearly recalled seeing a "maroony-brown" Samsonite suitcase in the container of luggage to be loaded on to Pan-am 103. This was one of two cases he thought must have been put into the container while he went off for a tea break in the afternoon before the bombing.

He said that his colleague, a handler called Sulkash Kamboj, said he'd put the cases in the container, though at the fatal accident inquiry in 1990 Kamboj denied saying any such thing. At the trial ten years later, when it was put to Kamboj that he was calling his colleague a liar, Kamboj replied that he wasn't calling Bedford a liar, but insisted he had not put the cases on the container.

The judges preferred Bedford's story to Kamboj's, but what was beyond any doubt was that for the first and only time in the case a witness — John Bedford — described a suitcase of the type that had contained the bomb, which is likely to have gone on to the doomed plane very near the place where the explosion happened. One further point now seems to have even greater relevance than it did at the time. Bedford said he'd left work before any interline baggage had been prepared for loading on Pan-am 103. This meant that the Samsonite case he saw could not have come from any other airline, but could have come from the Pan-am baggage area now exposed as insecure by Mr Manly.

If the bomb originally went on the plane at Heathrow, the accused Libyans could not have been responsible for it. That is why Bill Taylor QC, for the convicted man Abdelbasset Al Megrahi, spent such a long time expounding 20 points which pointed to Heathrow as the "place of ingestion". Now it emerges that after what looks like another in a long line of Lockerbie cover-ups, vital evidence was denied him and his client.

GRIN AND BARINGS IT

AMONG the country's top accountants who are not candidates in this year's much-prized Accountant of the Year award is one Gareth Davies, senior partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Before PwC became the vast conglomerate it now is, Mr Davies worked for Coopers & Lybrand, auditor to Robert Maxwell and to the Wallace Smith Trust, a stupendous fraud cleverly devised to enrich its sponsor, who was eventually prosecuted and imprisoned.

In a not entirely successful attempt to shift the blame, Coopers sued two Canadian law firms who advised the trust. The case collapsed when Peter Chapman, head of the firm's banking insurance group, broke down in the witness box after admitting that Coopers had been incompetent and had misled the Bank of England.

He was smartly replaced in the box by a psychiatrist who said that in his view Mr Chapman was suffering from "acute anxiety" and was "unable to function or process information properly". Mr Justice Rimer promptly discharged Mr Chapman from giving further evidence, and Coopers withdrew its allegations and its case against the law firms.

At Coopers & Lybrand Gareth Davies had helped audit the Wallace Smith accounts, but his work there, though disastrous, did not attract the undying wrath of his employers. He stayed on to take part in another major Coopers audit – for Barings bank. In 1994 the big boys at Coopers became irritated that Barings' business in Singapore was audited by another company, Deloitte & Touche, and successfully insisted that this business should be transferred to Coopers. Thus, as a result of its own greed, did Coopers become auditor not just for the fine old English bank in Britain but also for its business in Singapore in the very year the bank was brought to its knees by the fraudulent activities in Singapore of a fine young English dealer called Nick Leeson.

Leeson was sent to prison, and eventually Mr Davies and a colleague at Coopers were called to account by the joint disciplinary scheme (JDS), which was set up by the Institute of Chartered Accountants to make sure accountants obey the rules. The case against Davies was heard by a JDS tribunal, consisting of a lawyer and a couple of accountants, in 1999.

The result is still not known but it is fair to assume that the findings were not entirely in Mr Davies' favour. He is appealing against them to a JDS appeals tribunal (another lawyer and another couple of accountants). The result will not be known for a few weeks, but however unfavourable it is to Mr Davies, the case is unlikely to affect his immediate future.

He will almost certainly be kept on at PricewaterhouseCoopers while it defends its civil action against the creditors of Barings, represented by another big accountancy firm, Ernst & Young. This case is due to start any day now in front of Mr Justice Evans-Lombe. So many lawyers and accountants have clamoured to attend that a special court has been constructed in Holborn to accommodate them.

A useful project for those studying the distribution of income in modern Britain would be to calculate how many QCs at £1,500 a day (minimum) how many junior barristers at £800 a day (minimum), how many senior solicitors at £500 an hour (minimum) and how many senior accountants at £500 an hour (minimum) are in court for an interminable civil case in which the general public have no interest whatever.

YACHT A SCAM!

ARTHUR ANDERSEN, the big accountancy combine, has circulated clients with a brochure vital to their interests called *Vat planning for luxury yachts*.

It explains the problem in a background note. "As from January 1 1993, the EU deemed that all yachts beneficially owned corporately or individually by a resident of the EU and kept within EU territorial waters shall be liable to Value Added Tax." This shocking interference caused much dismay among ordinary yacht-owners, but Andersen and two accountants in Holland have "undertaken considerable research into a proper and effective method of substantially reducing the VAT burden for larger yachts".

The five "fundamental steps" are: 1. The yacht is owned by an offshore company. 2. A charter contract is entered into between the yacht-owning company and an offshore charter company. 3. The offshore charter company charters the yacht to a Dutch charter company. 4. The Dutch charter company, De Valk, imports the yacht into the Netherlands in its own name under the VAT deferment scheme. 5. De Valk then sub-charters the yacht to an ultimate user.

Got that? If you haven't, the brochure explains: "The advantages of the scheme are that because of the VAT deferment scheme in the Netherlands it is not necessary to pay and then reclaim the VAT. Secondly, the charter fee (on which Dutch VAT is payable at the rate of 17.5 percent) need not be at a commercial rate, thereby mitigating the effective rate of VAT to acceptable proportions".

There hasn't been anything so ingenious since Ernst & Young's famous scheme to avoid VAT on hospital equipment – a scheme stopped by the government after it was exposed in the *Eye*.

BURNING... WITH INDIGNATION

AS THE *Eye* went to press magistrates were considering what sentence Newcastle city council should receive for spreading toxic incinerator ash on allotments, footpaths and bridleways. The deliberations were of little comfort to those who believe their health has been put at risk.

Residents believe the council and the Cambridge-based incinerator operator, Heat and Power Ltd, have been let off the hook by the Environment Agency, which brought the prosecution. It agreed to drop two serious charges of transferring toxic waste in a manner likely to harm human health after the council pleaded guilty to two lesser charges of spreading the poisonous muck without a licence. It also formally withdrew three charges against Heat and Power after accepting a guilty plea to one charge of breaching the environment protection act.

The plea bargain means residents who fear they have been exposed to cancer-causing dioxins and other heavy metal poisons will not get any kind of public airing into the Byker incinerator scandal, which saw toxic material spewing out and spread over the area for years. They have had to settle for the council's internal investigation, which they allege seriously underestimates both the environmental and health damage.

Relying on Newcastle's "official" figures, it seems that at least 2,000 tonnes of cancer-causing ash from the incinerator was dumped by Newcastle council on allotments, parks and farms across the north-east during the 1990s. After concerns were raised by residents, the ash was tested and found to contain levels of dioxins which promote cancer and wreck the immune system.

Canadian environmental experts Hatfield Consultants suggested dioxin levels were, at one allotment site, 10 times higher than anything found in Vietnam after the use of Agent Orange. Blucher allotments were found to have staggeringly high dioxin levels compared to normal background levels in the UK – and far, far above recommended guidelines for growing crops.

Figures for the clean-up, however, obtained by local Liberal Democrat Tom Brake, show remarkable discrepancies in the amount of ash deposited and that later removed by the council, suggesting the full scale of the incident has not been revealed.

Most worryingly, on at least 25 sites the amount of ash removed is only a small fraction of what was originally deposited. Although some of the ash may have leaked into the soil, the scale of the discrepancy is hard to fathom and no one is convinced by the council's attempted explanation.

Moreover, locals want to know about the poison that spewed out of the Byker chimney on to homes and gardens around the site. That has been completely ignored; as have claims that waste material was used in construction and went to sites not yet identified.

Subsequent reports, commissioned by the council, found evidence of "an elevation of the body burden of dioxins", but did not conclude that this would be seriously harmful to health unless consumed in huge quantities.

But these findings have been questioned by an independent environmental investigator, Alan Watson, of Public Interest Consultants. He claimed that an out of date measure for toxicity, which lowers readings by about 10 percent, was used, and that the effects on young children of both eating contaminated products and playing on contaminated soil were not measured at all.

He wrote: "The contamination of allotments in Newcastle by high levels of dioxins and heavy metals from the Byker incinerator could be one of the most serious dioxin contamination events in the UK and possibly even in the world.

"This is because it is nearly unprecedented to have high levels of dioxin contaminated material being introduced so directly on to land used for personal food supplies, including eggs, for a large number of people."

But on the most contaminated Bucher allotments, no chicken or egg was even tested. June Woolf, who sent vegetables from her allotment for independent analysis, received figures for heavy metal up to 25 times higher than that recorded by the council.

Tom Brake and residents believe the flaws and discrepancies can only be answered by a public inquiry. But the court case, which will now only involve a short statement by the Environment Agency prosecutors, is all they are likely to get.

SPURLING CRISIS

HELLO again to the *Eye*'s old chum John Spurling, late of Febbs Management, who, after its demise, went into pet insurance with a new company, Pet Protect.

His business went from strength to strength in the 1990s. The chief reason for his success was a lucrative licence to market the Kennel Club's Pet Healthcare plan. In return for commission, the Kennel Club gave Mr Spurling access to the owners of pedigree pups. This contract formed about 60 percent of Spurling's business by the time he sold it for £15m to General Electric's financial services subsidiary, Consolidated Financial Insurance.

Spurling became one of the 15 honorary members of the prestigious Kennel Club, but his legendary expertise in charity finance led him higher still. He became a treasurer at Tory party central office and a friend of William Hague.

His offer to pay for the building of a membership database for the Tory party was gleefully accepted. He engaged a firm of computer consultants, Enever Systems, who had built his own computer system at Pet Protect, and a computer systems programmer, Sue Boucher. The arrangement was that Enever would pay her and reclaim the money from John Spurling.

All went well for a few months when suddenly the money for Boucher dried up. Asked for the money by Enever, Spurling protested that it was owed not by him but by Tory central office. After weeks of unseemly argument, Andrew Enever wrote a letter to Mr Spurling which started with the surprising sentence: "I can't help thinking that your unwillingness to stick to your agreements or even to tell me why you don't stick to them is born out of a desire to put me out of business."

Mr Enever claimed his company was owed £48,756.63. He attached documents showing how the debt had piled up and demanded the money by return. He enclosed a draft letter to William Hague, "seething with anger at the shabby way I have been treated". If the money was not paid instantly, Enever told Spurling, he would send the letter to Hague. Hey presto! When Enever returned from holiday a few days later, there, waiting for him, was a cheque from Mr Spurling for £48,756.63.

Mr Spurling never looked back. In the year 2000, he was awarded an OBE and, trained by Hague's assistant Sebastian Coe, ran in the London marathon, raising, he claimed, more than a million pounds, half of which went to the favourite charities of the Kennel Club. The *Eye* hears that he now hopes to get the licence to run the Kennel Club's pet insurance scheme – the pet health care scheme he helped set up.

The *Eye* asked the Kennel Club whether it was appropriate for the licence to run such an important part of the club's business to go to one of its very few honorary members. A spokesman replied: "We may be offering a licence for the health care plan, but as far as I know no licensee has been approached or named."

FOLLOW-UPS...

NORTHUMBRIA POLICE: The reluctance of Inspector Knacker of Northumbria to investigate serious allegations against his own officers, as revealed in the last *Eye* in the case of nurse Kathleen Atkinson, is not unique, it seems.

Paul Randall says an off-duty officer accused of kicking him in the face escaped trial for assault because of delay in getting the case to court. The judge who threw out the charge against PC Edward Hedley earlier this year blamed the police for sitting on the file for a year before submitting evidence to the crown prosecution service (CPS) and the CPS for delaying the issue for more than another year.

Robert Fox tells us that a police officer – seen on the force's own CCTV cameras kicking and punching a husband and wife – also escaped prosecution because it took fellow officers too long to investigate. Mr Fox had gone to the aid of two students who were being attacked by a gang, but was then arrested and set upon by police who thought he was part of the fracas. By the time a file was submitted to the CPS it came after the six-month deadline for common assault charges. The officer, however, did face a disciplinary hearing for use of excessive force.

In addition, Stan and Lynn Reed have been trying to get an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the suicide of their son Tony, a police officer with Northumbria. Mr and Mrs Reed say their 35-year-old son hanged himself four years ago because of the way he was ostracised and bullied by senior colleagues.

Northumbria will not investigate the allegations because, er... as PC Reed is dead he cannot give his permission for an inquiry.

WILLOW PARK: More on the Manchester housing trust Willow Park (*Eye* 1034) and the response from its chief executive Mervyn Jones (Letters, 1035). He resented our suggestion that, in transferring local authority housing to "registered social landlords", some of the money was going awry. He wrote: "There is no police investigation at Willow Park." The statement is accurate, but somewhat economical with the truth.

The reason there is no investigation is that there has been a successful police prosecution. Former Willow Park manager Brian Matthews received a three-year sentence for fraud relating to VAT and false invoices at the housing trust. The Housing Corporation can now resume its investigation into how the association failed to spot the fraud.

Mr Jones also objected to the idea that the new owners of council housing may have promised to do more work than they could afford. Unfortunately Jones would not respond to *Private Eye*'s telephone calls, and so was unable to comment on the allegation that his housing director Len Narborough is investigating selling millions of pounds worth of rent arrears from his tenants to "debt recovery agencies", raising funds by putting tenants at the mercy of loan sharks.

Jones also rejected the idea that passing council housing to new "registered social landlords", was effectively privatisation. While he claimed that "we are not part of the private sector", the housing transfers are governed by a section in the department of the environment called the "housing associations and private finance division".

CAFCASS: Things go from bad to wórse at the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (see last *Eye*). After having its knuckles wrapped by the high court last week for illegally trying to force new contracts on children's guardians – young people's independent voice in court – informed sources within Cafcass, aka Carcass, say the shortfall in budget, is likely to top £25m by the end of the year.

Now that Lord Irvine's plan to tell guardians to work for less has failed – the courts ordered him to negotiate – Carcass must seek savings elsewhere. Napo, the family court union, has called for the national audit office to examine the books. One Carcass board member, Judge Nigel Fricker, has already resigned with another threatening to follow. Joe Kuipers, director of operations and Carcass's number two, has walked out after 10 weeks.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

IN THE BACK

ARMS BIZARRE

THE time-honoured practice, exposed by the Scott inquiry into arms for Iraq, of promoting British arms sales to countries that might use them against Britain or her allies continues under "new" Labour.

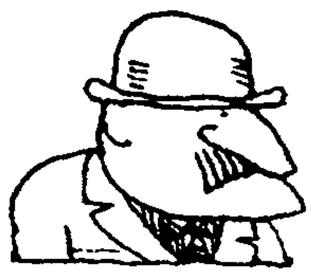
In August foreign secretary Jack Straw named China, India, Syria and Pakistan as countries whose ballistic missile technology justified George Bush's son-of-Star-Wars scheme. Nevertheless, China and India were invited by the ministry of defence to the Defence Sales and Export International (DSEi) conference and arms fair in London's Docklands last week; and Syria and Pakistan were invited by the fair organiser, Spearhead, with the MoD's approval.

Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and TRW, three of the main contractors on the Star Wars programme, all exhibited. So did British Aerospace, which hopes to pick up subcontracting work on the scheme. To complete the dotty picture, last July Lockheed was fined $13m by the US government for breaking arms export laws and selling rocket technology to China.

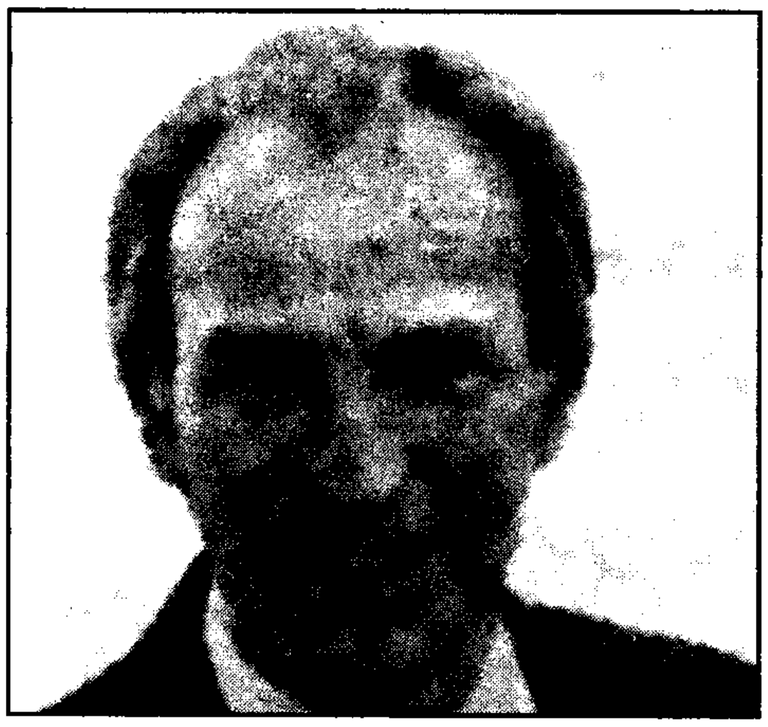
Straw had picked out China, India, Pakistan and Syria (alongside four nations that weren't invited: Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea) in his "briefing on National Missile Defence" to the parliamentary Labour party. He said they had or "were moving towards acquiring intercontinental ballistic missiles… It is difficult to see for what purpose these countries would want an intercontinental missile capability other than to threaten and deter the United States."

The DSEi exhibition and conference, Europe's biggest arms fair, was opened by defence secretary Geoff Hoon, who then addressed the delegations from countries that the foreign secretary views as threats. Hoon's MoD wined and dined delegations from Bahrain, Brunei, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Delegates from these not altogether democratic countries were able to shop for tanks, guns, helicopters, jets, warships and electronic kit.

Alongside the Star Wars contractors was a host of high tech firms offering gizmos related to missile and satellite systems, including Roke Manor Research, a British firm which recently announced a product which will detect that symbol of Nato power, the stealth bomber. According to Roke, a Hampshire-based subsidiary of Siemens, its new detection system means "stealthy aircraft will be rendered useless".



In the City



Anthony Hilton

LLOYD's is already totting up its potential bill from the up to $100bn cost expected to result from the insurance claims for human, property and business losses resulting from the World Trade Center catastrophe. As a major direct and reinsurance centre the Lloyd's market is expected to face substantial liabilities.

The profitability of the Lloyd's insurance market is a subject of more than professional interest and comment to renowned *Evening Standard* City editor Anthony Hilton. He is a director and shareholder in a major Lloyd's underwriting group which was one of the first to take advantage of the introduction of corporate membership to offer individual "names" a chance to limit their risk.

Not, however, that readers of the *Evening Standard* would necessarily know that as this information has never featured on its pages. But then neither has the fact that celebrated City commentator Anthony Hilton is also a director of a number of other companies.

"...it's all gone bear-shaped"

Hilton is a non-executive director of Greenwich Insurance Holdings, set up in 1997 to promote the ability of individual "names" to underwrite with limited liability, thereby removing their cufflink risk to the kind of unlimited losses from asbestos, pollution and natural disasters which ruined so many of their number. Greenwich claimed to be the biggest of these corporate membership conversion schemes. "Names" swapped their underwriting capacity for Greenwich loan stock. Greenwich claimed to have an underwriting capacity of at least £125m.

Hilton was one of the more than 300 "names" who took up the Greenwich offer. Furthermore, the Greenwich accounts for 2000 reveal that Hilton was appointed a non-executive director last October and holds 3,500 ordinary shares plus £175,000 in loan stock. Payment in full and conversion of the loan stock into shares is due this year. He also holds almost 9,000 share warrants. As Greenwich is unlisted the value of this investment is uncertain.

"He was one of the original directors of Grenville Underwriting I and transferred his underwriting into Greenwich Insurance Holdings via Grenville Underwriting III for the 1999 account," the report records. Hilton is in fact also unpaid chairman of the Greenwich subsidiary Grenville Underwriting I. That company made losses of £1.25m and £1.45m in the past two years.

Sadly Greenwich also has not to date been a great success. It made a loss of £14.7m last year, slightly up on the £14.1m loss for 1999, and has paid no dividend.

Somewhat surprisingly, Hilton – as "one of the original directors of Grenville Underwriting I" (he was appointed in September 1996) – did not refer to this fact when writing about Greenwich's successful launching of Grenville II in the *Standard* on 25 September 1997.

He celebrated that it had reached its target "perhaps because it is one of the few that offers names the four-to-one gearing they can enjoy as an unlimited name". An advantage City editor and director Hilton was only too well aware of. Instead he bemoaned the fact that "names" were not rushing to switch to limited liability. "Conventional wisdom decrees that the unlimited name has had enough of Lloyd's and with past liabilities largely cleared up under the rescue scheme would welcome a way out." Like perhaps former unlimited name, A. Hilton via Greenwich.

This was not the first time Greenwich had appeared in the *Standard* since Hilton had become a Grenville director. A puff for Greenwich Lloyd's Underwriting, not written by Hilton, appeared in November 1996. On neither occasion was the Hilton connection disclosed, nor when, since he became a Greenwich director last year, he has

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG

TELL ME NURSE- WHICH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LINE?
WELL, THIS ONE SISTER. IT'S...
NURSE – YOU MUST KEEP UP WITH BEST PRACTISE...
MEGACORP MEDICARE
IT'S THIS ONE HERE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BALANCE SHEET!
BALANCE SHEET
100.

Stock Horror

Change in the value of defence giant British Aerospace (now 'BAE')...

...in the year before the terrorist attacks

...in the days since

"...ditch telecomms"

written about Lloyd's.

Hilton's other business interests are in publishing. He is a director and 10 percent shareholder of Headway Publishing with former *Standard* City editor and regular columnist, William Davis. Davis and Headway are best known for publishing *High Life* magazine for British Airways. Hilton became a director in February 2000. Headway made a loss for the period to March 2000.

In March this year Hilton was made a director of Newsdesk Communications which specialises in vanity publishing. Newsdesk publishes glossy directories for organisations and agencies, including one for the stock exchange a year or so ago. Hilton had previously been a consultant to the company. Strangely the appointment is shown in Companies House records as having been made in May and reported in June despite the Newsdesk accounts showing the appointment as having happened on 21 March. No doubt an administrative oversight.

Hilton is also a director and effective sole shareholder of a family company, Hadleigh Hall, formed in 1998 and into which Hilton invested some £200,000. It showed assets of £264,000 in February 2001 and had made profits after tax of at least £38,000.

Perhaps surprisingly for a financial journalist supposed to espouse transparency, Hadleigh Hall, like Newsdesk and Headway, publishes only abbreviated accounts with limited fiscal information taking advantage of the legal loophole of the exemptions for small companies.

Doubtless Associated Newspapers, owners of the *Evening Standard*, are fully aware of Hilton's outside interests — his City expertise is utilised as a director of several *Mail* group pension trustee companies — which are also recorded as required at Companies House. It is a pity such interesting information is not shared with *Evening Standard* readers.

'Slicker'

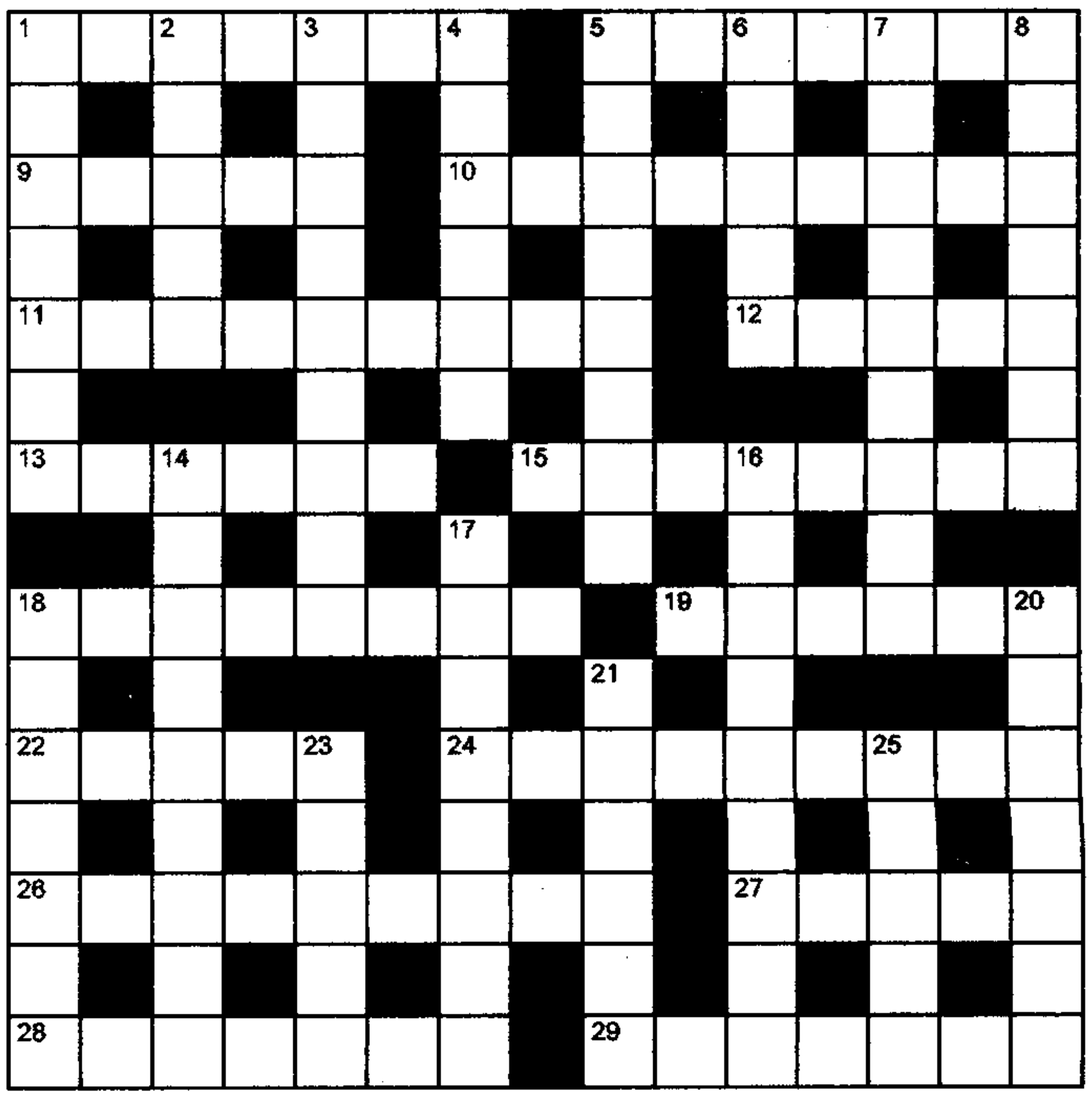
EYE CROSSWORD 192

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 28 September 2001.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.

191 winner BARBARA TEPPER



ACROSS

1 Where, possibly, to get a 38D silicone implant, for example (without point) (3,4)
5 Nasty type taking pot after film ... (7)
9 ... — old starlet in flipping tabloid stink (5)
10/18ac. Run off your feet? Care for a low-seated bunk? (4,1,4-5,3)
11 It's a great thing being under him, squirming, squeezing tip of goolies (9)
12 An authoritative decision to utter "darn" aloud (3-2)
13 This place calls for "hat off before sex with one" (6)
15 Minister responsible for *The Blue Guide* (3,5)
18 See 10
19 Took a piss, abandoning pointless wank — beasts! (6)
22 Damned useless leaders, politicians and shits (5)
24 Mother topless, pissed and pickled (9)
26 Wound up getting head, leading to feeling of pressure (9)
27 Definite frisson in nylons and ladies' tops (5)
28 Overheard piss taken by Brenda, possibly (as our old queen would refer to herself) (5,2)
29 Racists meeting resistance were duffed up outside town (7)

ACROSS

1 VIP celebrity robber losing money to Randy (3,4)
2 Son going to study? Piss off! (5)
3 Clumsy couple had sex involving ass (3-6)
4 Hot member stifled by Blair's gob (6)
5 Dodgy love risk, broadcaster's chopper (8)
6 Gentlemen's fashionable cast-off range (5)
7 It takes guts to bomb awful dive (5,4)
8 Is turned off by attempts to indulge in gay exposure (4,3)
14 One means of preventing a leak: cover up with brass (4,5)
16 Taking the piss out of Joy after screwing (6,3)
17 "Bollocks!" as proprietor Lord Gnome claims (3,2,3)
18 Accountant's car balls-up (7)
20 "Bastard's Charter" – the last thing you'd want – no doubt will happen (4,3)
21 Rubber contraceptive's tip runs round arse (6)
23 Posh's bulge (5)
25 Pavarotti's figure filled out with outsize ravioli starters (5)

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD 191

ACROSS: 1 Aphrodisiac 7 Purer 8 In the nude 10 Ophelia 11 Insider 12 Unmanning 13 Hypes 14 Offer 16 Look-alike 19 Eunuchs 21 Up front 22 Nullified 23 Rebec 24 Bullshitter.

DOWN: 1 Abraham 2 Hard-liner 3 Origami 4 In thing 5 Items 6 Clued up 7 Pro-European 9 Eurosceptic 13 Head first 15 Fan club 16 Lassies 17 Opus Dei 18 Iron bar 20 Chill.

Yobs

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THE OBSERVER

ENIGMA

15

MIRAMAX

AT CINEMAS NATIONWIDE FROM SEPTEMBER 28

ED SMITH FOR KARUSHI LTD PRESENTS AS SEEN ON CHANNEL 4

MARK THOMAS

DAMBUSTERS: TALES OF DISSENT

SEPTEMBER

17 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD Old Town Hall 01442 228091
18 WINDSOR Arts Centre 01753 859336
19 20 BIRMINGHAM MAC 0121 440 3838
24 DARTFORD The Mick Jagger Centre 01322 291100
25 HEREFORD Courtyard Theatre 01432 359252
26 MAIDENHEAD Norden Farm 01628 788997
27 EDMONTON Millfield Theatre 0208 807 6680

OCTOBER

1 LEEDS City Varieties 0113 243 0808
2 SHEFFIELD Memorial Hall 0114 2769 789
3 BURY ST EDMUNDS Theatre Royal 01284 769505
4 BRACKNELL South Hill Park 01344 484123
8 HORNCHURCH Queens Theatre 01708 443333
9 GLOUCESTER Guildhall 01452 505089
10 STAFFORD Gatehouse Theatre 01785 254653
11 NORWICH Maddermarket Theatre 01603 620917
15 STEVENAGE Gordon Craig Theatre 0870 0131030
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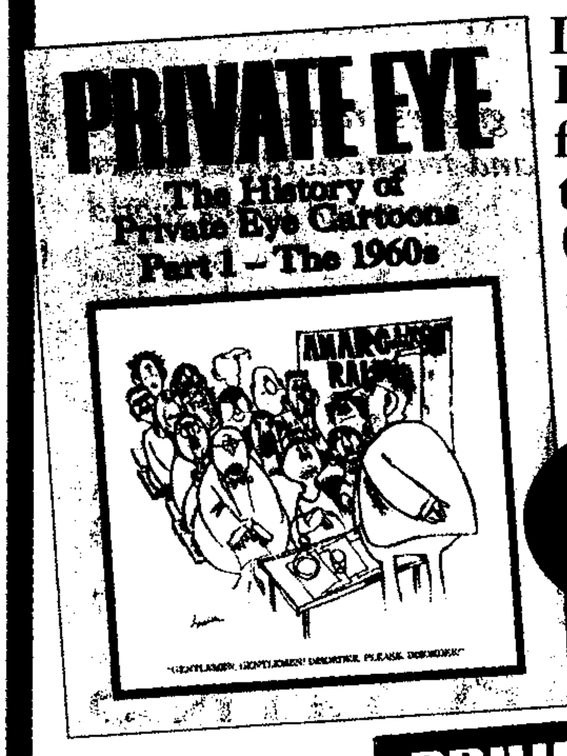

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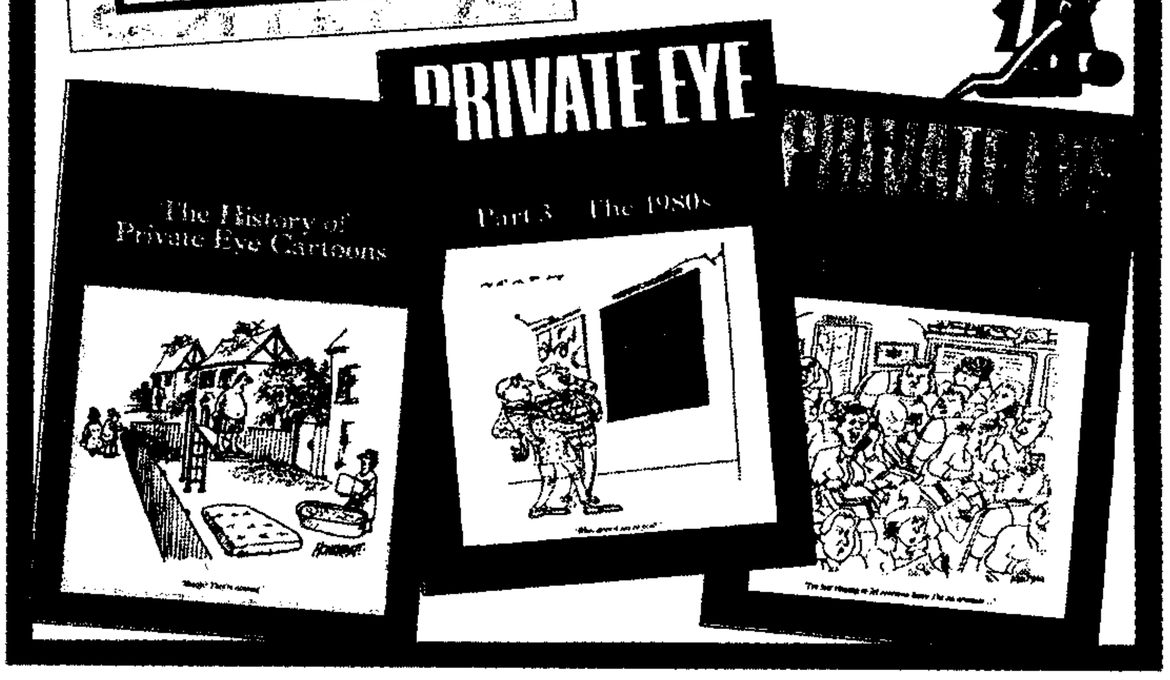

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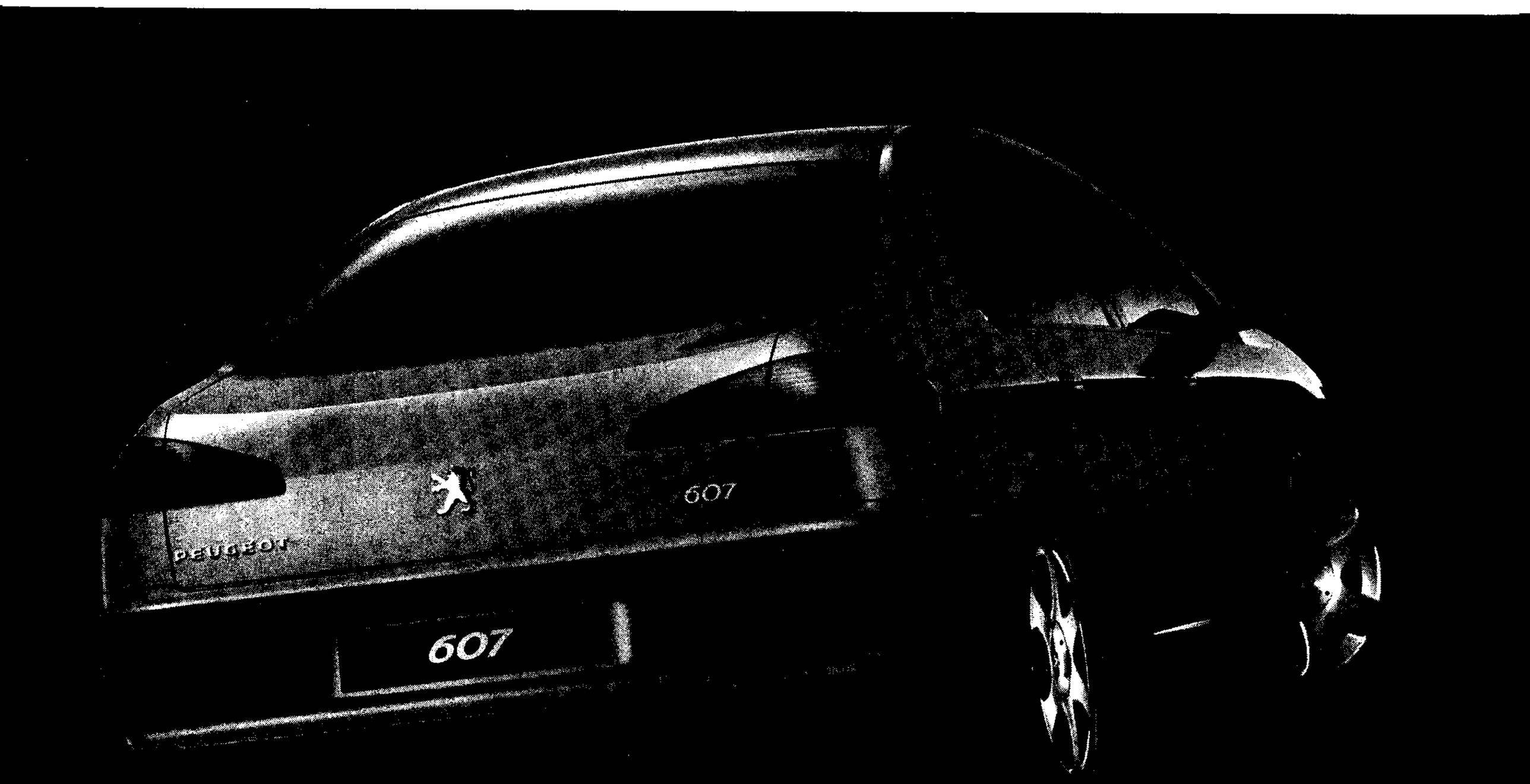

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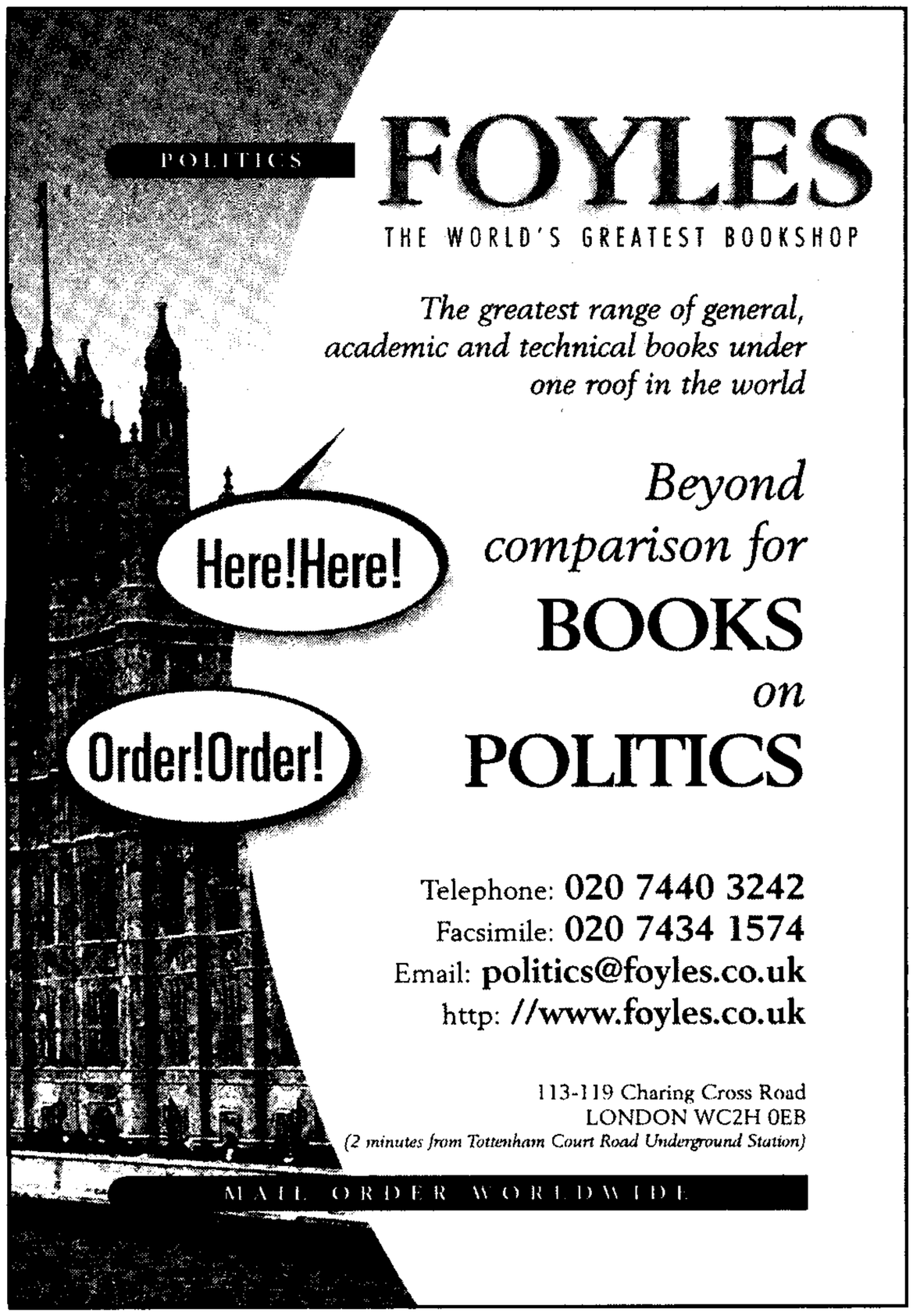
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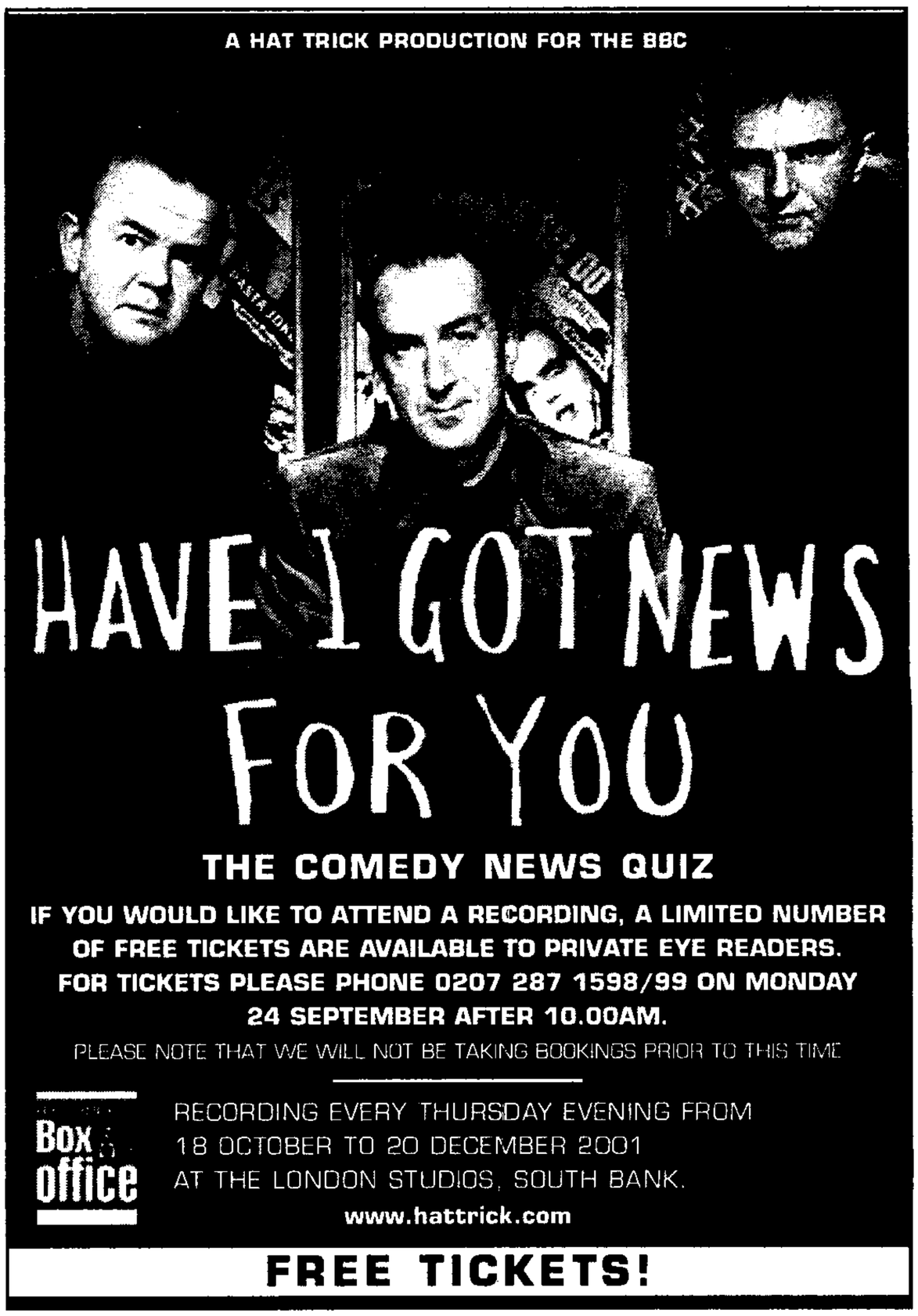
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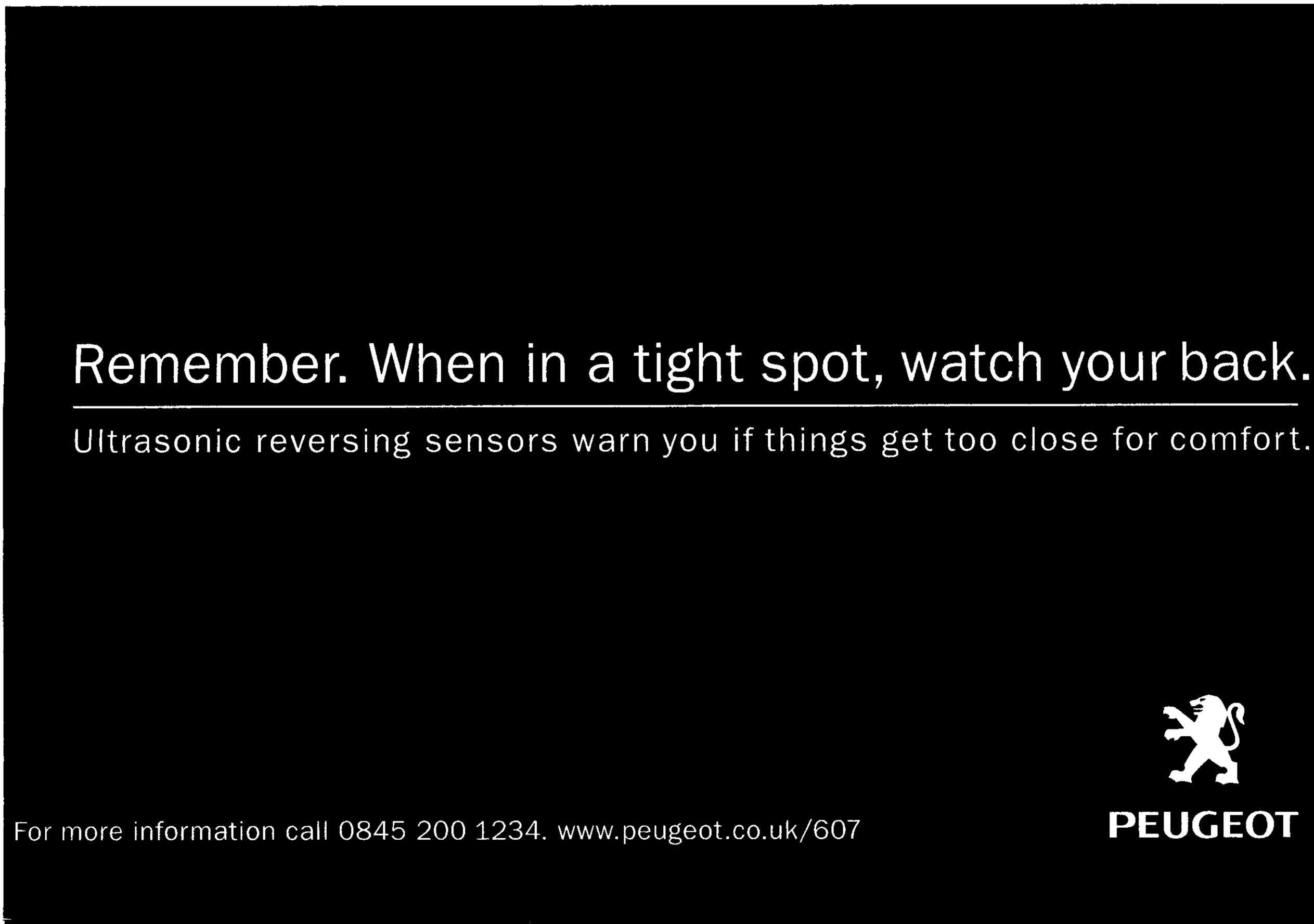
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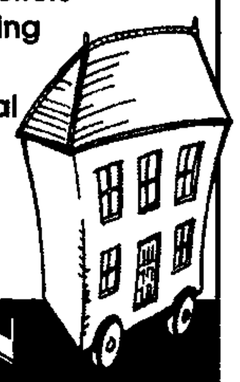

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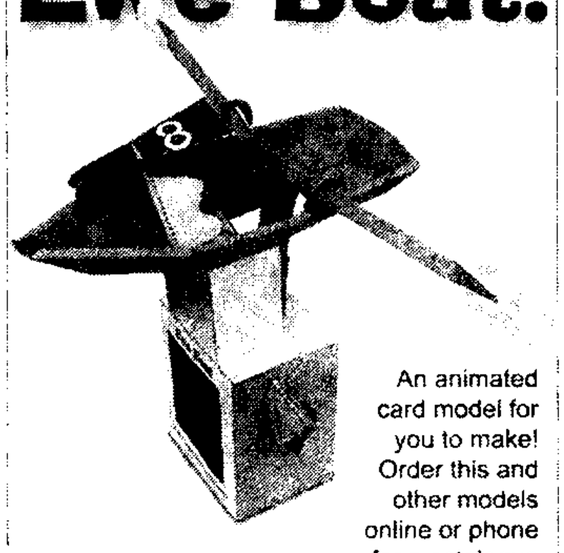

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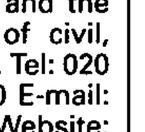

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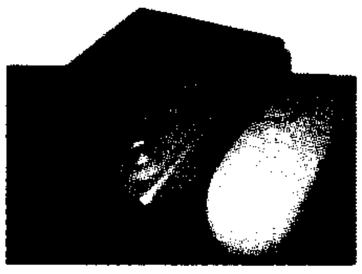

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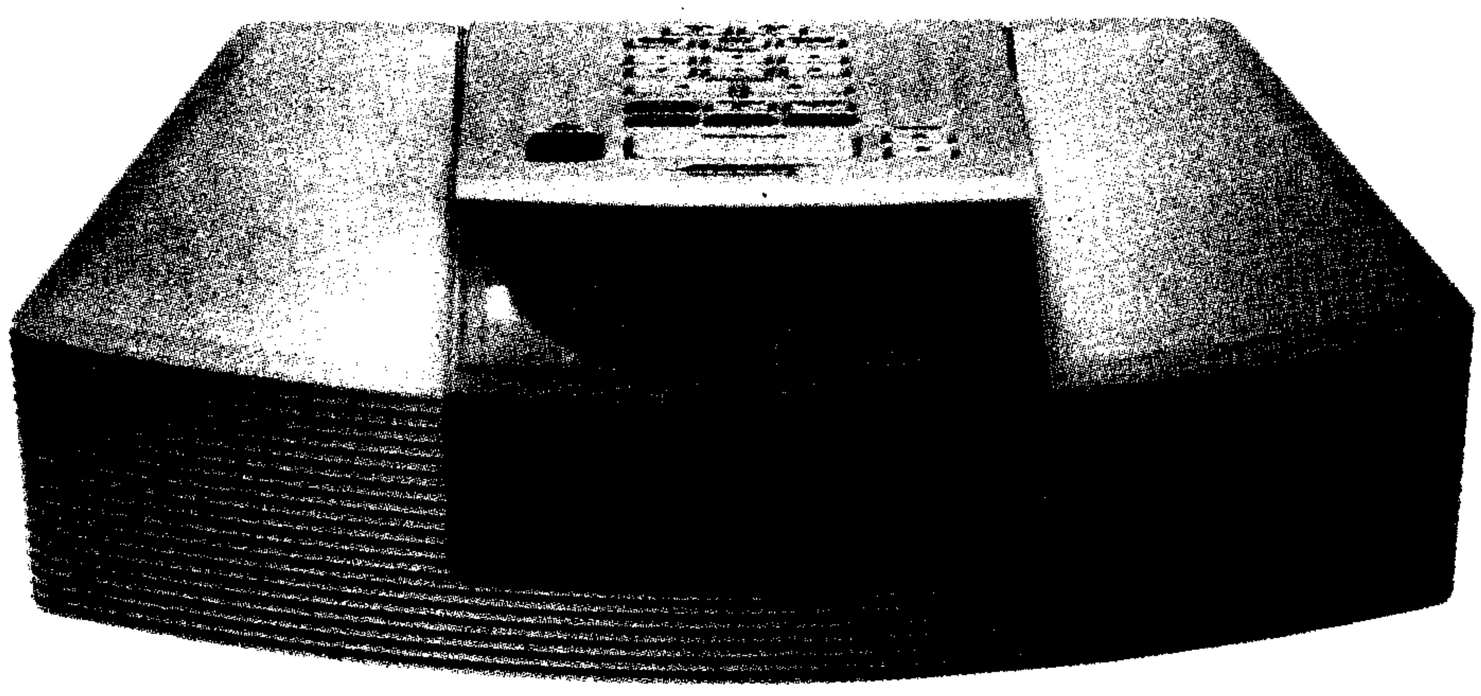

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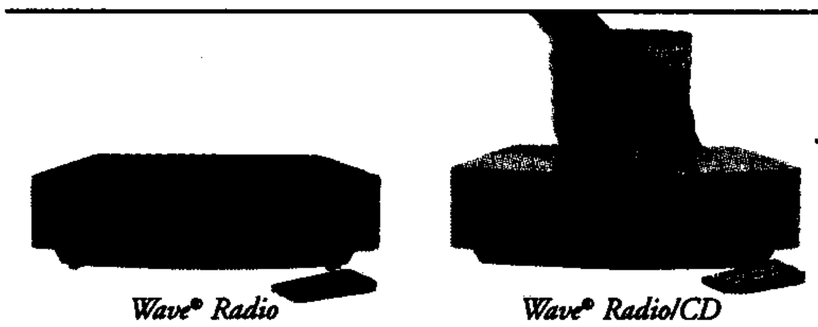

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